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HN 43

CO  
(Bridgewater)  
Powell

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THE HOUSE IN WHICH ADMIRAL BLAKE WAS BORN

*Frontispiece*

# BRIDGWATER

IN THE

## LATER DAYS

BEING A SUCCEEDING VOLUME TO "THE ANCIENT  
BOROUGH OF BRIDGWATER"

BY THE

REV. ARTHUR HERBERT POWELL, M.A., LL.D.

VIAR AND RURAL DEAN OF BRIDGWATER

Author of "Our Eternal Life Here"; "God Speaking in Nature";  
"The Influence of Jeremy Bentham upon Modern  
Thought and Legislation"; "Sources of  
Nineteenth-Century Deism," etc.

WITH MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS

BRIDGWATER: PAGE AND SON

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1905



THE SCHOOL HOUSE WHERE JACK WAS BORN

914.238  
P88

# BRIDGWATER

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BRIDGWATER  
P. 100  
1908

WITH MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS

BRIDGWATER: PAGE AND SON

1908



## PREFACE

**I**T was not my intention, when I completed my previous book, *The Ancient Borough of Bridgewater*, to write a second volume dealing with the story of the town during the period of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mediæval times possess a greater interest for me, and it was my hope that another hand would write the later volume, if such were ever called for. But I was urged, from many quarters, to undertake the task myself, and eventually did so. This book is the result of the effort.

There is, of course, very little that is common to the two books. The times changed so completely and so quickly that the eighteenth century seemed like the dawn of a new age. Elections to Parliament began to assume an importance which they had never before possessed. A keen desire to acquire the right of franchise grew up in the minds of men, which found its expression in the Reform Bill of 1832. The great ministers of the Crown grew to be men of such commanding influence that they ceased to merely ratify the wishes of the Sovereign. They initiated, guided, and carried out a policy of their own, based in ever-increasing measure upon the wishes of the electors. The Sovereign still wielded great influence, but he ceased to be autocratic. The balance of power came to lie with the Cabinet, behind whom lay the popular will. My aim has been rather to exhibit something of the tendencies

## PREFACE

of expanding thought and life, as illustrated in the later history of an ancient English provincial town, than to crowd the canvas with details of events.

Again I have to express my thanks for much help received. The Municipal authorities have again permitted me to use their documents, and the Town Clerk and Mr. R. J. Letherby have been exceedingly courteous in giving me access to them. I am indebted to my friend Mr. Richard Cooke, of Detling, for many suggestions in the plan of the book. Several documents and papers have been lent to me by Mr. Edward Trevor, Mr. A. J. Coles, Mr. Maurice Page, Mr. Alderman Pollard, Mr. W. H. Kitch, Mr. H. E. Vine, Mr. W. H. Smith, Capt. Jobson, Mr. Harden, the Rev. H. Butler, the Rev. H. Trotman, and others. An old inhabitant of the town, Mr. Henry Hayward, now eighty-five years of age, has, too, given me much information drawn from his long personal acquaintance with the place. So also has Mr. Creedy, who has seen ninety-six years of Bridgwater life. Mr. Trevor's documents have been specially useful, notably in enabling me to fix the exact site of the old Castle, which has been drawn upon the map which I owe to the kindness of Mr. A. B. Cottam, our Diocesan Surveyor. I desire also to acknowledge my thanks to Messrs. Brendon & Son, who have taken extreme care with the printing of the two volumes, and to the publishers.

Lastly, I thank the many friends who have encouraged me with their kind appreciation during the preparation of the work. I hope they will not be utterly disappointed with the result.

ARTHUR H. POWELL.

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**ERRATA IN THE FORMER VOLUME ("THE ANCIENT BOROUGH OF  
BRIDGWATER").**

- Page 137.** Read William Wollen, 1785-1844. Omit James Wollen's name from the list of vicars of Bridgwater. He assisted his father, but never was vicar of the town.
- Page 237.** In the last line of Henry Newbolt's poem read *the land his soul desired, for this soul desired!* The latter is an obvious error.

# BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

## CHAPTER I

### IN THE DAYS OF QUEEN ANNE

**I**N the year 1717, on the 28th of May, a band of musicians was engaged in playing upon its instruments outside the famous old Swan Inn in Bridgwater, incited thereto, as was alleged, by the worthy Mayor of that year, Ferdinando Anderdon. Within the hostelry a party of gentlemen had gathered together, for mutual edification and for celebrating the due rites of hospitality. It was, indeed, a great day; the birthday of His Majesty King George the First, Sovereign of the United Kingdom and Elector of Hanover. Now in a strange way it transpired that this presumably innocent and loyal feast became tinged with suspicion. The musicians were asked by the town authorities whether it was true that they had, at the Mayor's desire, played the tune, "The King shall enjoy his own again." Horrified at the thought, the minstrels stoutly declared upon oath that they had done no such thing.

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

A few years earlier a similar party of Bridgwater men had met together at the same old inn, and, as it would seem, spent a very happy evening indeed. There was eating and drinking, and singing of songs. Yet, when it was solemnly alleged against them that they had drunk to the health of "the King over the water," not one of the guests could remember such an incident. The details of the toast-list had vanished from their memories.

Within a short time, however, a clearer case came to the knowledge of the alert loyalists of the town. A man, one William Erle, was standing near to the High Cross, gazing with some interest upon an individual who was then fixed in the pillory for having uttered words of sedition. The observer also saw one Edward Parry, a trooper, and heard the latter aver that the man in the pillory was an acquaintance of his, and was one of his countrymen, and that "the Pretender was his King." Erle hastened to protest with the discreet ejaculation, "King George is my King." Thus it would appear that he whom the loyalists called the old Pretender, and who was known and loved amongst the Jacobites as Prince James Francis Edward Stuart, the Chevalier de St. George, had friends in Bridgwater when the eighteenth century had begun to run its course.

King William the Third died on March 8th, 1702, his wife Mary having pre-deceased him some eight years. In spite of many good qualities, he was not really popular with his subjects. His foreign birth was against him, and so, in a far greater degree, was his intense reserve. In the course of a ride on

## IN THE DAYS OF QUEEN ANNE

horseback, William's steed stumbled over a molehill, and threw his rider. The King never recovered from the shock, and the incident gave rise to the favourite Jacobite toast, "To the Little Gentleman in Black Velvet." It will be remembered that in 1689, when the Declaration of Rights was drawn up, the crown of Great Britain was settled upon Anne in succession to William the Third. William's wife, Mary, was the second daughter of James the Second by his first wife, Anne Hyde, who was the daughter of Edward Hyde, afterwards Earl of Clarendon, the famous historian and lawyer. Mary died leaving her husband a childless widower, and therefore the obvious necessity arose, in course of time, for making yet further regulations for securing the succession to the throne, while providing also for the exclusion of the exiled Stuarts. This was settled, before Anne came to the crown, by the Act of Settlement which was passed on March 12th, 1701. The situation was indeed a curious one. Anne, born on February 6th, 1665, was married at the age of nineteen to Prince George of Denmark, brother of the reigning sovereign of that country. She had seventeen children, all of whom save one died at birth or in very early infancy. That one, the poor little Duke of Gloucester, lived on till the year 1700, and then passed away. Thus she also was childless when she ascended the English throne, and before the Act of Settlement was passed. It became clear that something had to be planned.

The matter was solved, as such things usually are, by a combination of conflicting principles and convenient probabilities. It was not an easy matter to set about looking for a successor to a throne, and

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

especially to the English throne. Relatives and descendants and connections of English royal families were dotted about all over Europe. There were plenty of people willing, nay eager, to oblige the English people by consenting to come, when Queen Anne's reign should end, to rule over them. But this amounted to nothing. Two things were absolutely necessary. Some royal personage must be hit upon who could substantiate some reasonably valid claim, and at the same time the banished Stuarts must remain banished still. There must be a link with the past monarchy, for old sake's sake, and in order to preserve at least the aroma of kingly descent. But the Stuart methods were never to be permitted in England again.

The solution of the difficulty was not a brilliant one, yet it was convenient. It was agreed to choose the Electress Sophia of Hanover, who on her mother's side possessed some connecting links with King Charles the First, and who also was at the head of one of those reigning German Houses that might be relied upon to bear no love to the outlawed descendants of that unfortunate monarch. Moreover Sophia the Electress had a son George, who also had a son, and thus there was a probability of successors to the English sovereignty. Sophia was not greatly enamoured of the offer made to her, yet it presented the possibility of benefits to her family, and after the fashion of those days she looked at it chiefly from that point of view. She accepted, and the deed was done. The grand-daughter of James the First of England undertook, if Providence should so order events, to become Queen of England at

## IN THE DAYS OF QUEEN ANNE

Queen Anne's death. She never succeeded to that throne, but her son George, thirteen years later, became the first English monarch of the House of Brunswick. The question of the succession was settled for a while. Yet the Act of Settlement brought no small disturbance to England in the early part of the eighteenth century. And it grievously affected Bridgwater, and Bridgwater people too.

For there was another side to the question, a side which appealed strongly to the English adherents of the Stuarts, among whom, as we have seen, were some Bridgwater men who kept high festival at the Swan Inn. When James the Second bade farewell to the Mayor and Aldermen of the ancient borough in 1686, they, not unnaturally, hoped they might never see his face again. Their desire was fulfilled. James escaped to France shortly afterwards, and his place in England knew him no more. But by his second wife, Mary, daughter of the Duke of Modena, he already had a son, James Francis Edward, born at St. James's Palace on the 10th of June, 1688. Thus at Queen Anne's accession this son would be about fourteen years of age. Moreover, the boy—the young Chevalier—was, it could not be forgotten, half-brother to the Queen. King James was dead now. He passed away at St. Germain's in September, 1701. But James's son remained, and with him a whole crop of possibilities which eventually ripened into actualities. Anne was a woman of deep natural affection, and her devotion to her relatives was extreme. "My poor brother," she sometimes said of the young James, whom, fortunately for her own

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

Sovereign's action and will. Debate took its place as one of the chief ingredients in fashioning English policy. The centre of gravity ceased to be in the person of the monarch; it lay within the precincts of Parliament. Yet despite these developments it must also be borne in mind that these advances in the mode of government grew slowly, and that parliamentary influence had, even in its initial stages in the eighteenth century, more real power within the walls of Westminster than the people generally grasped. The inner circle knew that Harley and Bolingbroke and other great Ministers pulled the strings and dictated the policy; the outsiders—notably in the provincial towns—scarcely realised this as yet. The reality of power is frequently most potently exercised when its existence is scarcely beginning to be known. London knew, and held its tongue. The country towns guessed a little, and were content. For the time they were quite satisfied to discuss the succession to the throne, and to let other matters wait.

It is not entirely easy to conceive quite truly of the social circumstances of that time. The chief English towns then, after London, were Bristol, York, Exeter, Nottingham, Shrewsbury, Winchester, Canterbury, and, as a place of pleasure and fashion, Bath. Bridgwater, it will be seen, occupied a highly favourable position as lying between Bristol and Exeter, and it was probably better acquainted with the doings and sayings of the great ones of the realm than most towns of its size. Its relative importance as a port was also far in excess of what it is to-day. News came to it, though tardily, both

## IN THE DAYS OF QUEEN ANNE

by sea and by land. Bath was growing to be an important centre of fashion and of Court gossip, and it came soon to be a necessity for all people of rank and fashion, as Beau Nash would have said, to be seen there at times. Later on its reputation for high society—and for its gaming-tables and drawing-rooms—grew apace. Many a squire and squire's lady from Somerset travelled thither in the family coach, and some of them left behind them there sums of money which made disastrous inroads upon the paternal estate. The population of London then was about three-quarters of a million, or about one-tenth of the estimated population of England and Wales. In Bridgwater the population in 1695 was about two thousand two hundred and odd inhabitants, and within the boundaries of Chilton, Haygrove, and Dunwear there were six hundred more. The whole area then contained considerably fewer than three thousand people, and it was not until 1797 that the town had five hundred houses and three thousand inhabitants. In Queen Anne's days, however, a place inhabited by two thousand people was a town of importance, and was held to be justified, so to say, in giving itself airs. The villages also held a far greater relative importance than they do now.

We are apt, with singular lack of insight, to bestow feelings of sincere pity upon the people of that time. It is true that their lot was circumscribed, and probably also true—though in a diminishing degree—that their sober wishes never learned to stray. Even in London the chief streets were, very sparsely, dimly lit by a few wretched oil lamps.

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

The way of travellers must have been as hard as that of transgressors, for there were no police, and there were petty thieves in abundance. The roads were execrable, and the watch provided by the civic fathers was incompetent to a very painful degree. To go to one's home in a London or Westminster street after dark was to court robbery, and not infrequently robbery accompanied by violence. If these things were so even in the metropolis, in what condition were the country towns? We know that they were ill paved, or not paved at all; that the lantern was the usual means of lighting; that most people—unless they were holding revels in some favourite inn—stayed at home as soon as evening time closed in. Very few books were to be had, and no newspapers. The daily post-office conveniences did not exist as yet. There was, in fact, but little need for them, for very few people thought of writing letters at all, and the great majority had not acquired the art of writing. To be able to read was an accomplishment highly prized, by reason of its exceeding rarity. There was a calm in men's manners which this day knows not, a calm perhaps begotten of the necessary habit of almost always staying at home. There was ample time for conversation, and the chief opportunity for this was at the inns, where men met; in the markets, and in one another's houses. Agriculture, of course, was the staple and overwhelmingly important occupation, and as a topic of conversation it must easily have eclipsed every rival. Those who travelled acquired a fortuitous importance which was in itself some compensation for the perils of the road, and the oft-repeated anecdote of a man's journey to

## IN THE DAYS OF QUEEN ANNE

London would provide him with joy for a lifetime. The rich who travelled used (it was a necessity) substantial coaches drawn by four or even six horses, and such journeys were obviously very costly. For fashionable folk in the towns the sedan-chair was coming into vogue; one such famous chair lingered on long in Bridgwater, and was well known in the realms of Castle Street. In a word, people lived quieter lives then; there was less haste, less impatience. It is only fair to say that there was also a keen insight, and a true spirit of observation prevalent then which is found to be sometimes lacking now. Men were weather-wise because they watched the weather. They knew the habits of birds, beasts, and creeping things, because they regarded them at first hand. The house-wife had quaint cures of her own for all sorts of ailments; she was frequently a herbalist in her small way. The doctoring was rough and ready, and was generally accompanied by the copious letting of blood. These are a few of the symptoms which were evident in country towns and places when the eighteenth century dawned. It may be well to have alluded to them, however briefly, in order better to understand the prevailing type of mind which would, in provincial districts, be available for considering the problems and the future of the nation's life.

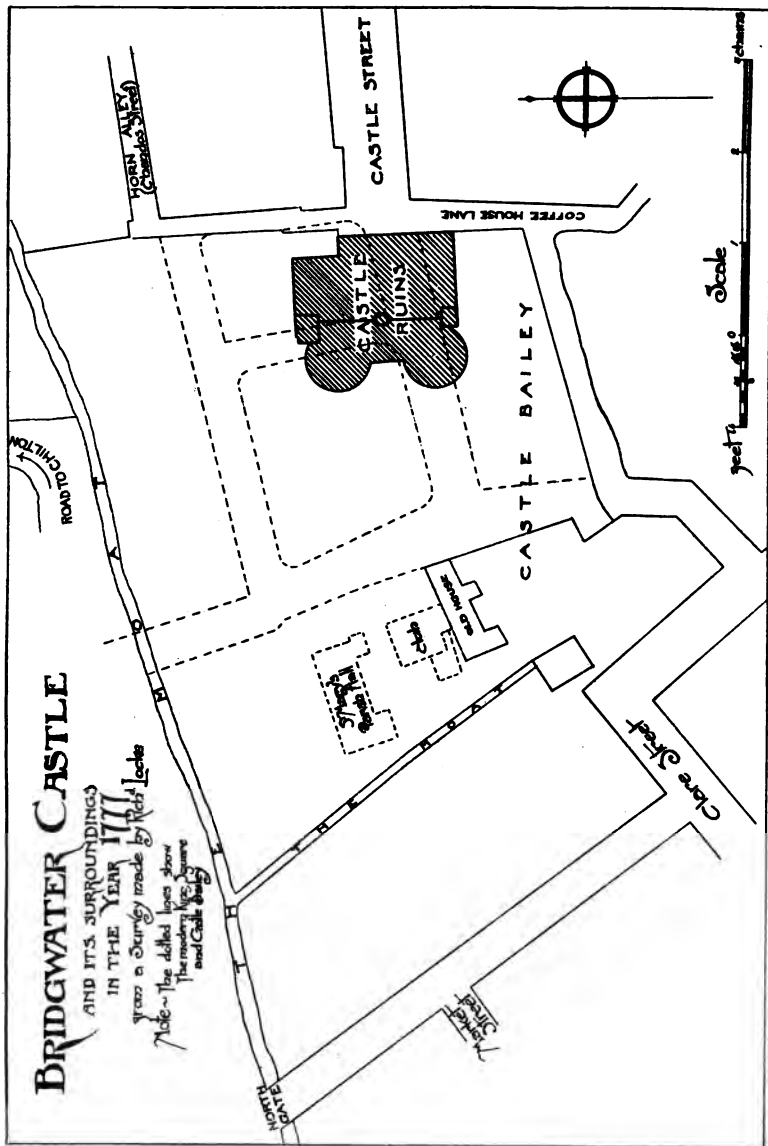
The chief problem which arose was, What was to be done with the Stuart family after Queen Anne's death? Perhaps among all English towns Bridgwater would feel this question more keenly than any other. For Bridgwater had suffered bitterly under Oliver Cromwell, who had battered down her ancient

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

streets, and had humbled the town to the very dust. Her castle had had to capitulate, her vicar had been bundled neck and crop out of his benefice, and an intruder (albeit a well-meaning man) had been thrust into St. Mary's Church. The siege of 1645 had half ruined the old town, and there were men living who could remember the whole sad scene. They had not forgotten the tyranny of the proscription of the Book of Common Prayer, with all the pains and penalties attached even to its use in private, and in their memory still remained the painful story of the desecrations committed in their old church. The Stuart Charles the Second, moreover, had brought them peace. Under him their town was repaired, their Church order was restored, their vicar came out of his exile and his bitter poverty, back to his work again. Churchmen who under the Commonwealth scarcely dared to breathe, came out of their thralldom at its abolition, and were free men once more. These things were still remembered by Bridgwater men in Queen Anne's reign, for it was not yet fifty years since Charles came from across the sea to ascend the English throne. No one has ever been quite able to explain how it was that the Stuarts, with all their blunderings and muddles and mistakes—and these were very many—so captivated the hearts of thousands of the English people. Charles the Second was, as a monarch, not a success. He ruled simply by reason of his personal popularity, and because Englishmen were nauseated with so many of the doings of the Commonwealth. James the Second was intensely disliked, as indeed he richly deserved to be. But there was one man

# BRIDGWATER CASTLE

AND ITS SURROUNDINGS  
IN THE YEAR 1777  
year a survey made by Mr. Locke  
Note - The dotted lines show  
The modern Mr. Dumas  
and Castle Bailey





## IN THE DAYS OF QUEEN ANNE

whom Somerset, and Bridgwater especially, had never forgotten. This was Monmouth, their darling, their hero. It was only a score or so of years since they had seen him ride out of the town at the head of his troops, eager for battle against the soldiers of King James. His treachery, his flight, his assumed Protestantism—all these things were forgotten now. A glamour hung over his memory; the glamour due to the brave Somerset lads who followed him. He too was a Stuart, or at least he was believed to have been one. In him still were centred the affectionate memories of many Bridgwater men, even then only in middle age, who had fought at Sedgemoor; or of children and young men whose fathers had fought there. To the unlettered folk of the Somerset wilds Monmouth was still no traitor, but a hero. He had been executed, it was true, but that was all King James' wickedness. Some even believed that Monmouth still lived, and would come amongst them again. It was enough for them that he represented, or had claimed to represent, the Stuart cause. They believed him to have been the son of Charles the Second and Lucy Walter, and perhaps he might even have been the lawful son of the King. Now Charles was dead, and James was dead, and Monmouth was dead. But the young Chevalier, James Francis Edward, was living. Surely he would make a better king for English folk than the dour Elector of Hanover. So, at any rate, argued many and many a Bridgwater man between 1702 and 1715, and for years afterwards. It was no wonder that boisterous revelry was held at the Swan or that Jacobite songs were sung gleefully there.

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

Looking back at that period from the standpoint of our own time, it seems almost impossible to realise that Bridgwater people, and thousands more throughout England, really thought that the Stuarts would return to full power. Yet they did believe this, and many statesmen high in office thought so too. The schemes of the astute Bolingbroke lay all in that direction, though, with the subtlety common to most politicians in that day, he finessed, and strove to keep in with both sides. The Earl of Oxford played the same dangerous game. Francis Atterbury, the eloquent Bishop of Rochester, was far more outspoken, and took no pains to conceal his Jacobite aspirations. He actually sent to Bolingbroke and proposed that when Queen Anne's death should have taken place James Stuart should be proclaimed at Charing Cross as King of England. The Bishop offered to lead the procession in his full canonical dress if Bolingbroke would only yield. But the statesman was more wily than the Bishop; he demurred, the scheme was too desperate. Meanwhile Anne was contemplating the dismissal of the Earl of Oxford from his office of Lord High Treasurer, and it was in the air that the Duke of Shrewsbury might succeed him. The scene was a thrilling one, and it will bear a brief allusion. Anne was grievously ill, utterly exhausted by the anxieties of her position, and distracted by the worries of the royal succession. Her suspicions of the Earl of Oxford had grown to be extreme. She believed, and believed rightly, that he was playing fast and loose with both Whigs and Tories. She had lost all faith in him, both as a counsellor and as a friend.

## IN THE DAYS OF QUEEN ANNE

Suddenly she made up her mind to give the Minister his dismissal. On July 27th, 1714, she summoned the members of her Council, and pathetically laid before them her perplexities and her distress. The shadow of death lay upon the widowed Queen; but a few days remained to her of the struggles and sorrows of an earthly kingdom. Yet the old spirit flashed up within her as she told the Council of Oxford's delinquencies, his neglect of State affairs, his habitual unpunctuality, and his utter lack of reverence and proper respect to her position as a sovereign. He was not unfrequently the worse for immoderate indulgence in wine; his advice was no longer of value, and, the Queen added, it was no longer sincere. Anne, despite her weakness, grew vehement in her manner as she narrated the story of her indignation, and took no pains to restrain the expression of her displeasure. Oxford was ordered to return his staff of office. The too shrewd Minister, willing to please all and any so as to serve his own ends, was superseded. It is only fair to say that he took his dismissal with real dignity. "Nothing in Oxford's official life became him like to the leaving of it."

Meanwhile the crisis and the hour were rapidly approaching. It was seen that the Queen was sinking, and that but a short time remained to her. A Council was therefore hastily summoned for July 30th, 1714, within three days of its last meeting. One topic alone held the minds of men—the problem of the new dynasty. Was it to be Stuart or Hanoverian? The Queen's hopes were known to all, and they were eagerly fanned by the support of

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

Lady Masham, who had now gained complete ascendancy over her. Bolingbroke secretly shared these views, as all men knew. He hoped to be Oxford's successor, and if he were to be, then he might dare to show his hand. Atterbury was ready for anything. It came to this. Upon that Council's decision lay the future of the House of Stuart. It might be that within two months England would be at war. It might be that the Somerset men would be wanted again, to follow the young Chevalier to glory and to a throne.

On Friday morning, July 30th, Queen Anne, worn out by the anxieties of the crisis and all that it meant to her, had an attack of apoplexy, and for a while lost the power of speech. The Council, big with possibilities, met in due course. Its fateful doings must be crowded into the space only of a few lines. Bolingbroke, of course, was there, and it was his expectation that no Privy Councillor would present himself who had not received a formal summons to be present. Yet every councillor possessed the right to come, and it was the exercise of this right which brought about what followed. The Duke of Ormond and some other Jacobite peers came, also the Duke of Shrewsbury, who at that time was Viceroy of Ireland, and was probably one of the ablest and most disinterested statesmen of the day. He had given great assistance to William of Orange at the time of the revolution, and he was a man who could not be neglected in any national crisis. But the surprise of the hour was yet to come. Presently two Whig noblemen, the Duke of Somerset and the Duke of Argyle, presented themselves. The states-

## IN THE DAYS OF QUEEN ANNE

men present must have been as much astonished as were the guests at Macbeth's feast, when Banquo's ghost appeared. For they were men of immense influence, and that they had come uninvited—in exercise of their constitutional right—showed clearly that something was in the air. The Duke of Somerset was one of the most commanding men in the kingdom. His property, his influence, his steadfast principles, and, it may also be added, his intense consciousness of possessing all these advantages, made him a man of singular importance, and never more than at a moment such as had then arrived. The Duke of Argyle, too, was a man of great weight in his way. Both these noblemen were known to be adherents of the cause of the Hanoverian succession. It was clear to the assembled councillors that no one could tell, as yet, whereunto this development might grow.

Presently the Duke of Shrewsbury rose and thanked the Dukes of Somerset and Argyle for their presence. Thus he thoroughly identified himself with their position. Then, after the two Whig dukes had demanded to see the physicians' reports as to the Queen's health, it was proposed that the Duke of Shrewsbury should be recommended to the Sovereign as Lord High Treasurer. Bolingbroke and the Jacobites, aghast, could do nothing. It was clear to them that the party in favour of George the Elector of Hanover was much stronger than they had imagined. The latter had not scrupled to declare themselves. They felt, it was clear, that the Jacobite game was played out. Thus ended one of the most memorable councils that ever met.

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

The Queen still lived, and a deputation of the peers hastened to seek an interview with their dying Sovereign. The Duke of Shrewsbury was one, and the Queen, when she was told of the decision of the Council as to who should fill the vacant office of High Treasurer, instantly agreed to receive them. As she handed the staff of office to Shrewsbury, she said, in a voice of great sweetness and charm, that she hoped he would use his great position for the good of her people. The Council retired, and they saw her face no more.

Meanwhile the authorities set vigorously to work. Regiments of troops were placed in and near to London. The fleet was ordered to be in readiness, and every possible provision was made to ensure the peaceful accession of George and the defeat of any attempt which James Stuart might make. In a word, the Whigs had won, and they knew it. They believed—and most people to-day will agree—that their judgment was a wise one—that the assured succession to the English throne of the Elector of Hanover, however uninspiring a person he might be personally, would be better for the ultimate good of England than the risk of endless wars and quarrels which would probably arise if the Stuart claimant were to be encouraged. He was also, in addition to other things, a rigorous Roman Catholic, and this—apart from concurrent reasons—sealed his fate with the Privy Council. Thus it was that England, or, let us say, the dominant power in England, declared for the Elector of Hanover. There was absolutely no affection or personal regard in the matter. George could hardly have called forth affec-

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tion from any one. He was an unimaginative, ignorant, rather dissolute man, but he seemed to be a safer investment for English interests than James Stuart, and so he won the day. On Sunday morning, August 1st, 1714, the poor harassed Queen passed out of this world, and George Louis, son of Ernest Augustus and of Sophia of Hanover, was proclaimed King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, and Defender of the Faith. The Brunswicks had come in; the Stuarts were a banned and persecuted race. Their rule had come utterly to an end.

Bridgwater people, remembering Sedgemoor and the wild, thrilling days of the Monmouth rising, were sorely put to it to make out what all these developments meant. Perhaps they hoped that the young Chevalier would land on the South Coast, as Monmouth and the Prince of Orange had done. He might aim for London, passing through Somerset on his way. What a welcome they would give him! What a stirring there would be in the old town! They had not, indeed, long to wait for news. In the course of the next year came the twofold Stuart rising in the north, one led by the Earl of Mar, and the other by Thomas Forster and the Earl of Derwentwater in Northumberland. The story, brief as it is, is a pathetic one, and it is a record of disaster from beginning to end. The battle of Sheriffmuir was undecisive, that of Preston went against the Jacobites. There was delay, there was indecision, there was pusillanimity. Many lives were lost, and much suffering was endured. The real cause of failure, however, lay in the power-

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

lessness of James to arouse any sort of inspiration or zeal in his followers. His courage was undoubted, but his reticence, his sedate mien, and his lack of personal influence made him an impossible leader of men. It was on the 22nd of December, 1715, that he landed at Peterhead, in Scotland, and his appearance amongst his followers rather depressed than encouraged them. On a day of ill-omen to the Stuarts, January 30th, in the following year, the retreat from Perth was decided upon. Then came the end of the rising. James had nothing else to do but to return, for he had dispirited his supporters, and had chilled their warm hopes. So, leaving Scotland, he set sail from Montrose, and reached Gravelines on February the 8th. His expedition had not lasted more than six weeks, and it had proved to the Jacobites that as a leader he was past hope. King George might breathe freely, for his rival was harmless. The Jacobites must wait for a better man, which they did, till the coming of the fateful year 1745.

It was a blessing for Bridgwater that James Francis Stuart never appeared in Somerset. His cause had a great following in the south-western counties of England, and it is certain that the Bridgwater people could never have resisted the temptation to follow him. Under such a man their efforts would have resulted in a second Sedgemoor. Nevertheless, they ceased not to pledge the Stuart cause, and to cast a longing look at its fortunes, for many and many a day. Those were the times of James Francis. The time of Charles Edward had yet to come.

## CHAPTER II

### WHIGS AND TORIES

**P**OLITICAL terms are frequently retained for daily use long after their meaning has changed and their significance has developed into something entirely new. It is so with the words Whig and Tory. A Tory of Queen Anne's days was one who clung with some tenacity to the doctrine of the divine right of Kings, and who was inclined to favour the Stuart succession on that account. The Whig, on the other hand, regarded the Sovereign as one who had entered into an engagement with the English people to govern according to certain fixed principles, which, being duly observed, ratified the King's hereditary right of passing on the succession to his children. The two terms also indicated a certain bias of mind. The Tory of the early eighteenth century would be inclined to rely upon an aristocratic rather than upon a democratic class; he held an intense and most inspiring reverence for his Church and his Faith, he was loyalty personified to his Sovereign, providing that Sovereign was not a mere usurper placed in power by the faction of an hour. He held to the Monarchy and the State Church, and—in Queen Anne's time at least—he was strongly inclined to retain the theory of the divine

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

sanction for the Sovereign's supremacy. It is evident that William the Third's reign had acted as a solvent to some of these ideas. He was not a King who suggested Divine Right. He came in as a convenience to the nation, and very greatly to his own convenience. Under him, inevitably, the Divine Right of Kings received a shattering blow. But Anne, of Stuart blood, restored the old ideal somewhat. And the Jacobites, of course, favoured the theory to the very utmost of their power.

The Whigs, on the other hand, had different aspirations and different methods. Parliament, rather than the Sovereign, was their mainstay and hope. With them the ideal was the will of Parliament rather than the will of the King; Parliament being subject to the will of the people, and the King being subject, ultimately, to the expressed will of Parliament. Of course there were plenty of Whig Peers and Whig Bishops. William of Orange had seen to that. And just then the Whigs possessed the great advantage of having, at any rate, one settled policy. They were determined to keep the Stuarts out, and to avoid plunging the nation into civil war, by ranging themselves on the side of the Hanoverian King. Towards the close of Anne's reign the Tories had seemed to be having things all their own way. The Whigs had been cast out of power in 1710, and Harley and Bolingbroke came in, apparently, to carry all before them. The story of their schemes is a part of the History of England rather than of Bridgwater, yet it cannot be left entirely out of reckoning in sketching out the fortunes of the Old Borough. Bolingbroke's rebuff upon the very eve

## WHIGS AND TORIES

of the Queen's death has already been referred to; now George the First was King. His first problem was to deal with the Whigs and Tories. Which party would he favour? What were to be the King's ideals? Who were to be the new Ministers, and what was to be their policy in keeping things quiet in the land? The Jacobites, glum and disappointed, were all alert. The Whigs were determined that King George should find out that his rights were by no means so divine as theirs. But they were ready to take him under their wing, so to say. And they devoutly hoped that George would take them under his. A Whig King would be just what they wanted. He would keep the Stuarts in their proper place.

The time had come, indeed, for quieter days and quieter methods. The nation wanted rest. "Within a comparatively short space of time the English Parliament had deposed Charles the First; the Protectorate had been tried under Cromwell; the Restoration had been brought about by the adroitness of Monk; James the Second, a Catholic, had come to the throne, and had been driven off the throne by William the Third; William had established a new dynasty and a new system, which was no sooner established than it had to be succeeded by the introduction to the throne of one of the daughters of the displaced House of Stuart. England had not had time to become attached, or even reconciled, to any of these succeeding rulers, and the English people in general—the English people outside the circle of courts and Parliament and politics—were well satisfied when George came to the throne to let any one wear the crown who did not make himself

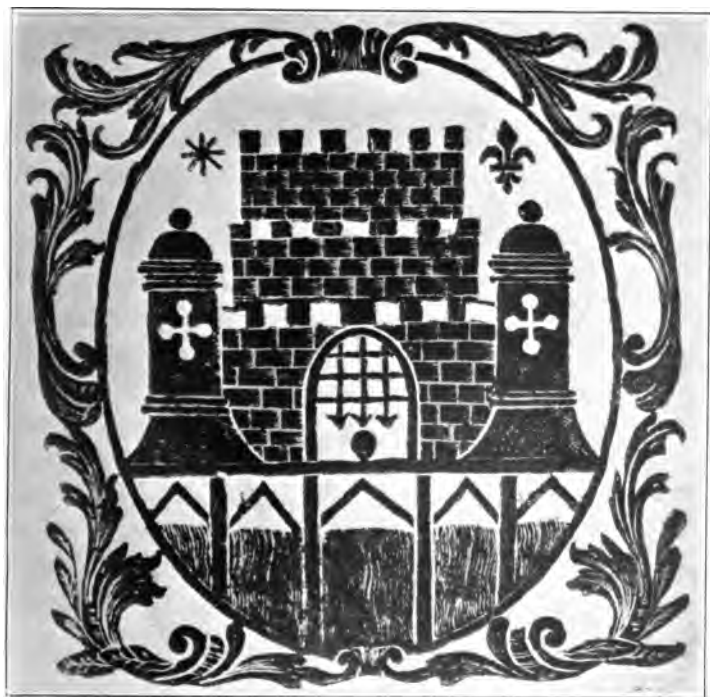
## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

and his system absolutely intolerable to the nation."

King George quickly settled the matter, and declared for the Whigs. He made no pretence whatever of conciliating the Tory party, many of whom, not unnaturally, he looked upon as utterly averse to his person, and inimical to his rule. He must have been aware that nearly one-half, or perhaps even a greater proportion of his subjects, were openly or secretly attached to the Stuart cause. Consequently he flung himself into the opposite scale. George the First was not a clever man; he was a hard-headed, calm man of business, and by his sheer common sense he often surmounted obstacles which a more brilliant ruler might have failed to overcome. Seeing that there were two parties in English politics, he would favour the party most favourable to himself. A rough and ready, temporising sort of rule, doubtless. Nevertheless it lasted George's time, and it served his purpose. Before long he found out the merits of that able and wise statesman, Sir Robert Walpole, and speedily the latter was promoted to high office. By 1721 he had become Chancellor of the Exchequer and First Lord of the Treasury. Not only was the first general election in the King's reign overwhelmingly in favour of the Whigs, and Walpole's power thus sealed, but the Minister—in spite of the bitterest opposition—contrived to maintain his power. The 1722 elections were quite favourable to him. Scarcely any Minister, indeed, has had so long a run of power. In 1727 George the First died, and although George the Second at



FRAGMENT OF THE CASTLE, 1792



THE BRIDGWATER ARMS  
FROM AN OLD DOCUMENT DATED 1797

*Facing page 24*



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first disliked Walpole, the King was bound to retain him, and the elections of that year again upheld him. Even later on, in 1741, one of the most fierce elections ever fought, the Whigs won, although they lost ground considerably. Walpole's career was then nearly, indeed, at an end. He was surrounded by enemies, and by eager rivals. The war with Spain was bringing endless trouble with it. Walpole had been, unwisely, dragged into it. In 1742 he resigned his great office, and retired to the House of Lords as Earl of Orford.

On May the 12th, 1741, Bridgwater was, with other constituencies, asked to vote for the return of two Members to Parliament. Fortunately some details as to the ins and outs of this election are available, and they are available, curiously enough, by reason of a protest which was made by a friend of one of the candidates on behalf of Sir Charles Wyndham, who came out at the bottom of the poll.

Since Queen Anne's Accession to the throne Bridgwater had had ten elections; this was the eleventh. Those, it will be remembered, were the days of open voting, and also of other electioneering incidents. As soon as the poll was declared, protests, pamphlets, and vehement statements frequently made their appearance, to be followed by counter-statements of equal vehemence, disdaining to mince matters. In 1741 the partisans of the defeated Candidate were exceedingly angry that their man had not got in, and in their published statement they made, it is clear, certain allegations. The text of this document, unfortunately, is not accessible. But whatever it may have been, it drew forth a vigorous

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disclaimer from the Town Clerk of Bridgwater, who proceeded, in the following printed statement, to defend himself and the victorious candidates. It is a significant instance of some of the political methods of the time, and it throws some light upon what Bridgwater elections were at the middle of the eighteenth century. It was published by Mr. Bryant, the Town Clerk, some six weeks after the election took place.

*A genuine list of the Voters who poll'd at Bridgwater,  
May the 12th, 1741.*

Candidates:—Hon. Vere Poulett, Esq.; George Dodington, Esq.; Sir Charles Wyndham, Bart.

### TO THE ELECTORS OF BRIDGWATER.

*“A spurious and incorrect Copy of the Poll, at the late Election for Bridgwater, fraught with Assertions, false, defamatory, and scurrilous, having been industriously distributed amongst the inhabitants and Country People in the Neighbourhood of that Place; it is therefore judged proper to publish a true Copy of the Poll taken at the High Cross on the Day of Election, ranged in an Alphabetical Order. But before we proceed to the Poll, it may not be amiss to make some remarks on their observations.”*

“The first Argument made use of in the Preface of the List published by Sir Charles Wyndham’s Friends, is, that the Country People have been treated with great Contempt, and called an insignificant Country Mob. In order to undeceive the World, and to set every one right in this Affair, it will be necessary to observe, that the

## WHIGS AND TORIES

principal Agents and Managers for Sir Charles Windham, finding their Party weak, after practising all the Vexatious Methods it was in their Power to exert towards the Electors, who stood to their integrity, resolved to call in the Aid of the Country Farmers and others, to influence the Tradesmen of the Town to vote for Sir Charles Wyndham, and in case of Non-Compliance, they were taught to threaten them with no more Dealings : In what manner these Menaces and other indirect Means were executed, is but too notorious ; so that the Sum of the Argument is, that the Country People have been treated with great Contempt, because the Electors would not be directed by them in the disposing of their Votes."

"But the chief Reason for publishing the said List is, to let the Country People know who of its (Bridgwater's) Inhabitants have honestly endeavoured to support Sir Charles Wyndham's Interest."

"Had it been said, that it was rather to point out to the Country People with whom they should or should not have any Dealings, this would have carried with it the Face of Truth : But how far Sir Charles Wyndham's Interest was supported by honest Men, the World may imagine from the great Number of Electors, who solemnly promis'd, and deceived the other Candidates when they Poll'd at the Cross."

"Come we now to the OBSERVATIONS,  
The first of which is in Substance as follows,  
"That many who had promised Sir Charles Wyndham before, deceived him at the Election ;  
'nor could there well be greater Instances of Base-

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

'ness and Treachery shewed, than there were at 'this Election.'"

"By comparing the List hereto subjoined, with the List printed by Sir Charles Wyndham's Friends, it will demonstrably be made evident, that the greatest Instances of Baseness and Treachery at this Election, were shew'd by Sir Charles's own voters."

"The great Liberty taken by this Author in defaming several Gentlemen and others of strict Honour, Integrity and Moderation, representing them as more than commonly rude and insolent, plainly discovers the Fury, Resentment, Rancour and Prejudice still subsisting amongst his ill-natur'd and turbulent Party, the Heads whereof (in the course of all their Management) as well as other inferior Persons (in the same Interest) richly merit themselves, to be distinguished with those very genteel Epithets, which they have so lavishly bestowed on the undeserving. Nor must it be forgotten to observe, that the haughty Carriage and imperious Behaviour of Sir Charles Wyndham's principal Managers (who acted more like Bullies than proper Agents) contributed not a little to the losing of his Election."

"In the next Place we are to speak of the Grand Assurance which, in the Author's words, is as followeth :—

"These gentlemen (marked thus\*) were unquestionably single for Sir Charles, but voted for 'Mr. Poulett, being assured that it would produce the 'like Compliment from him to Sir Charles, which (as 'the Customhouse Officers had not at that time poll'd)

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‘would have been returned, and must have secured  
‘Sir Charles’ Election, had there not been concerted  
‘a villainous and treacherous Agreement to the  
‘contrary, between the principal Agents of Mr.  
‘Poulett and those of Mr. Dodington.’”

“It is not doubted but William Moore, the Rev. John Coles and John Headford, voted for Mr. Poulett, in Expectation of a Return of the Compliment (tho’ Mr. Poulett did not expect or want their votes) but none of the others distinguish’d in the List with the same Mark as the three Complemeters; for the rest were unquestionably hearty in Mr. Poulett’s Interest, and always declared for him. But with what face could such a notorious Falshood be advanced, as that they were assured that this Complement should be returned? If they had any such Assurance, they are hereby called upon to declare from whom they had it. Had Mr. Dyke or Mr. Bampfylde any Assurance of this kind at the Old Angel on the Day of Election? We appeal to them. Or did Mr. Poulett give it to any of Sir Charles’s Friends? His message from the Cross to his single Voters plainly proves the contrary.”

“In the next Place, Mr. Poulett’s and Mr. Dodington’s principal Agents are charged with a villainous and treacherous Agreement, to hinder the return of this Compliment, otherwise Sir Charles’s Election would have been secure. How can Gentlemen be branded with concerting a villainous and treacherous Agreement, when they no more than honestly excited themselves to the utmost of their Abilities by promoting and securing the Election of the Candidates they were engaged for, and whose

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

Interests were separately supported by their respective Friends? So that upon the whole, this Grand Assurance has no other Foundation to be credited than the bare ipse dixit of an Anonymous Author, who is defy'd to prove his groundless and ungenerous Allegations."

"The next Charge is brought upon the Right Worshipful Philip Baker, Esq., Mayor, who, the Author says, for weighty Reasons best known to himself, did not vote at all; Mr. Poulett and Mr. Dodington having, at the Close of the Poll, no occasion for him. What a ridiculous insinuation is this, to charge a Gentleman for not voting, and at the same time to acknowledge there was no Occasion for his Vote? But it is said he did not vote at all for weighty Reasons best known to himself. If the Author had been endued with any Reason, or known any thing of the Duty of a Returning Officer, he would not have exposed himself in this spiteful manner; the Returning Officer is Judge of the Poll, and as several dubious Votes were Poll'd (whereof for Sir Charles were more than seven who had no manner of right of voting) a Scrutiny might have been demanded, the Mayor therefore did not think it expedient to give his Vote, that he might with strict Impartiality determine the Legality of the other Votes as a Judge, which, had he voted, he must have been deprived of, and would have become a Party. And this is the weighty Reason, and the true one for his not voting at all."

"Lastly. The malicious Libeller closes his Observations with a scandalous and base Reflection upon my self, who, he impudently asserts, promised all

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three, and was absent. What is intended by this false Insinuation, is easy to see, but how came the Observer to know my Secrets better than myself? And to have the Assurance to advance a thing, the first Part whereof I declare is absolutely false, and do assure him, that I did not absent myself thro' any fear of discovering my real Sentiments, or letting the World know for whom I should vote, but was confined to my Bed, as I had been many Months before, and was prevented from voting, only upon the Account of my great Infirmities, which I have more Charity than to wish may ever fall on this ill-natur'd, nameless Observer."

"The Disappointments of a hot-headed furious Party must to them be terrible. What will not inveterate Malice suggest, and insatiable Revenge carry into Execution? Now their Weakness is discovered, which they have endeavoured to put a Gloss on, by all manner of Ways and Means to Profusion; now, I say, they affect to give out that they were treacherously dealt with, and were not assisted with a Number of Votes which they pretend to say were promised to them; but I am absolutely convinced there never was any such Promise made; for on the Friday Evening before the Election Sir Charles Wyndham did me the honour of a Visit, when talking about the Affairs of the Election, Sir Charles was pleased to declare upon his Salvation, and that he would give his Oath and his Honour, that he never had made nor received any Proposals for joyning, and that he would not join with any Body; and upon my taking the Freedom to ask Sir Charles how he found Matters stood, he was pleas'd

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to answer, that he had not made any Calculation himself, but relied wholly on his Friends, who assured him he was safe."

"If any one circumstance can be pointed out in what I have here advanced, which is not literally true, I expect to be contradicted, and in perusing these Remarks, founded on Truth and Honesty, let the Reader first divest himself of Partiality, and he is left to make his own Conclusions, as Reason directs."

I am, Gentlemen,  
Your most humble Servant,

JAMES BRYANT, *Town Clerk.*

BRIDGWATER, *June 20th, 1741.*

The above protest by the Town Clerk is followed (bound up within the cover of the same little pamphlet) by a carefully compiled list of the voters, giving their names, and for whom they voted. The accusing letter R is placed against those voters who, as it was alleged by Mr. Bryant, "promised to vote for Mr. Poulett, but deceived him." Another letter of infamy, B, is placed beside the names of those that "promis'd to vote for Mr. Dodington, but deceived him." Sir Charles Wyndham's disappointments (if Mr. Bryant would allow that he had any) are not recorded.

The list is an interesting one, and its contents are very suggestive. Two hundred and forty-seven persons voted, and the election resulted in the return of Mr. Poulett and Mr. Dodington, Sir Charles Wyndham being, as the Town Clerk's letter has explained, at the bottom of the poll. The

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numbers were thus : Poulett, 157 ; Dodington, 132 ; Wyndham, 120. The sheet from which these figures are taken is slightly damaged, so that the number of electors who voted for one candidate only cannot be given, but evidently Poulett and Dodington were united against Wyndham. The latter consequently received most single votes.

Of these 247 voters, it may be instructive to note their occupations. Twenty-one were representative men of the town, known as Capital Burgesses ; sixteen Maltsters ; fifteen Inn-holders ; fourteen Butchers ; ten Bakers ; eight Perukemakers ; eight Joiners ; eight Tailors ; seven Smiths ; seven Mariners ; six officers of Customs ; five Yeomen ; five Attorneys ; five Apothecaries ; four Masons ; four Hatters ; four Shoemakers ; four Saddlers ; four Glaziers ; four Linendrapers ; three Mercers ; three Ropers ; three Curriers ; three Coopers ; three Helliers ; three Brokers ; three Ironmongers ; three Gentlemen ; two Merchants ; two Whitesmiths ; two Grocers ; two Bricklayers ; two Brickmakers ; two Stone-Cutters ; two Surgeons ; two Aldermen ; and one each of the following occupations, Brazier, Silversmith, Distiller, Shipwright, Sawyer, Sieve Maker, Sexton, Attorney's Clerk, Hosier, Excise Officer, Sailmaker, Porter, Bargemaster, Stay-maker, Architect, Basket Maker, Soap Boiler, Writing Master, and Drover. In addition to these, seven electors' occupations are undescribed, and nine appear under the designation Reverend (some clergymen and some dissenting ministers).

Some notes which are attached to the Voters' List

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are exceedingly quaint, and they reveal the pleasantries which were wont to be vented upon electors in the days of open voting, and also the outspoken criticism which the Town Clerk of Bridgwater of that day felt justified in passing upon such members of the electorate as had fallen under the lash of his political whip.

Richard Axford is pilloried in the Town Clerk's notes as "A disappointed place-hunter"; so also are John Hayne, Apothecary, and William Hozee. Henry Lasher is termed "A disappointed Place-hunter in behalf of his Son-in-Law," and William Laroche was said to have been "Disappointed in his Expectation of the Disposal of Places." William Prior, it was alleged, "Has a Son a Placeman, and had the Ideas which he had form'd succeeded according to his Application, he would have been Distributer of the Stamps for the Western Division of Somerset." John Bryant and John Culliford were labelled as "inhabitants of Chilton"; Christian Vanderborst was accused of being "an Alien"; while John Rogers, William Williams, and Sealy Bridge were said to be "not rated." James Coles, Attorney's Clerk, must have been singularly obnoxious to the Town Clerk, for he is termed "Busy and impudent, and never paid Scot and Lot." Thomas Davis, one would fain think, had other views than his country's sole benefit when he voted, for Mr. Bryant says that he was "Disappointed in his Expectation of the Disposal of Places, to his great Mortification." The Rev. James Knight, it was said, "Had an excellent Method of Influence in this Election, call'd Henpecking, by which is sup-

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posed to be meant, That the Electors' Wives bias'd their Husbands in favour of his Party on account of the private Treats he gave them at his House, tho' we cannot say, at his Expençe." The Rev. Henry Parsons was said to be "A mighty Discloser of his Party's Secrets," while the Rev. John Coles was labelled as "Exceeding busy and clamorous, unbecoming the Cloth." Mr. Charles Clement's failing, the Town Clerk averred, was that he was "A great Consumer of Mr. Dodington's October, &c." John Pine, a Cutler and Maltster, against whose name the terrible letter B appears on the voting list, is scathingly rebuked. "On receiving a sum of Money for Malt of a Land lord (his dealer) he called for a Sneaker of Punch to treat him, and after it was drank, order'd it to be placed to Mr. Dodington's Account. A sneaking Trick." With this culminating instance of political iniquity the Town Clerk's list of the sorrows and sins of the Electors comes to an end.

This was the last Bridgwater election which had any concern with the political fortunes of Walpole; before the town was polled again—in 1745—the powerful Minister was dead. The protest of the Town Clerk has in it, however, some insinuations that there was a considerable amount of laxity, of treating, and favouring, and promising without performing, at these elections. There can be no doubt that this was lamentably and entirely true. The days of the Georges were more corrupt and more immoral than the days of Charles the Second. It was an unhappy yet a fully recognised principle in political life to outwit the opposing party at all costs. Thus

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

a Minister might hold the most strenuous views on some political matter, and be daily in consultation with his party as to the best means of carrying their plan. Yet this would by no means prevent him from seeking to gain entrance—by any scheming, gift, persuasion, or pretence—to the circle and secret counsels of the opposing party, whose projects and position it was his desire to know. To seek their intimacy under colour of conversion to their own political attitude, and afterwards to betray their confidences, was looked upon as a *ruse de guerre* which was quite the proper means to use. Even Walpole, in his ministerial dealings, was an entirely unscrupulous man. His desire was to carry on the Government of the country in the most open and proper way, but if these methods failed, others had to be employed. He was prepared to follow the pursuit of a really noble plan for the good of his country, yet to follow it up by methods which can only be regarded as degrading and vile. Corruption and bribery were, in his days, magnified to the dignity of a fine art. This was being done within the walls of the House of Commons; what was likely to be done in the heat and excitement of public elections, when, very soon, votes came to have their regulated market price? Even votes for Ministers' measures were bought, at that time, from Members of Parliament. It was said of Walpole that he would buy the vote of any man who would sell it. If it were easier or more pleasant to bribe the member's wife, then he would adopt that plan, using diamonds, probably, instead of gold. It mattered not if the bribe were direct or indirect, secret or open. Votes must be

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had, or measures could not be passed. Such were the morals of high political life in 1741.

An immense improvement came at length within the walls of Parliament, or a crash must have ensued. The time came, and was not so very long in coming, when no member of any respectability would sell his vote to any Minister on any terms whatever. Yet, with a strange inconsistency which has persisted for many a year, and even lingers in some quarters to-day, such a member would cheerfully adopt the most liberal and free-handed corruption amongst the electors of the constituency which he hoped to win. This was certainly the plan in many of the Provincial towns of England during the eighteenth century. Bribery and treating flourished like the cedars in Lebanon; they were the recognised means. The Prime Minister would achieve his ends by means of the gifts of lucrative posts, pensions, and pleasant sinecures. The Candidate for Parliament attempted to secure his by parallel methods amongst the voters. One thing must be said. Walpole himself could not be bribed. He was not avaricious, and no man could influence him by any temptation of place or reward. He played upon other men's weaknesses, and used them. But he would not consent to be thus used himself.

Very probably Mr. James Bryant's plaintive plea about the disappointment which certain electors in Bridgwater experienced in 1741 was a well-founded protest. There were, it is to be feared, some seekers after Place and Power, as well as some consumers of Mr. Dodington's October and his Punch. Private treats in private houses in favour of this or that can-

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didate did, there is but little doubt, occur. Promises of favours were made, and some of them are certain not to have been fulfilled. The Town Clerk's final appeal is an *argumentum ad hominem*. He appeals to the reader to divest himself of partiality, and to form his own conclusions. Those conclusions probably would be that there was considerable bribery and influence at that election ; that some at least of the voters thoroughly approved of this ; and that the electorate must, on the whole, have had a very merry time.

### CHAPTER III

#### EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY BELIEFS AND SUPERSTITIONS

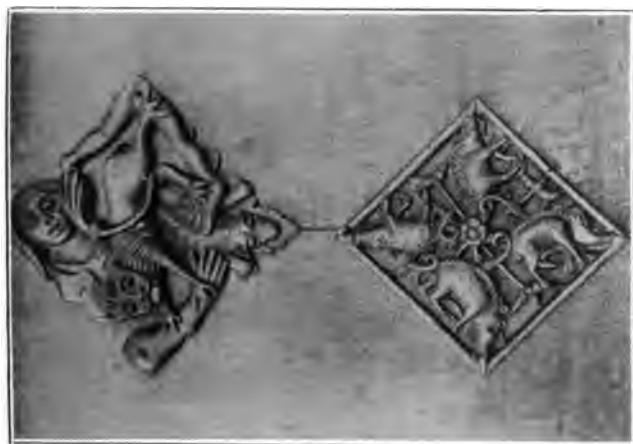
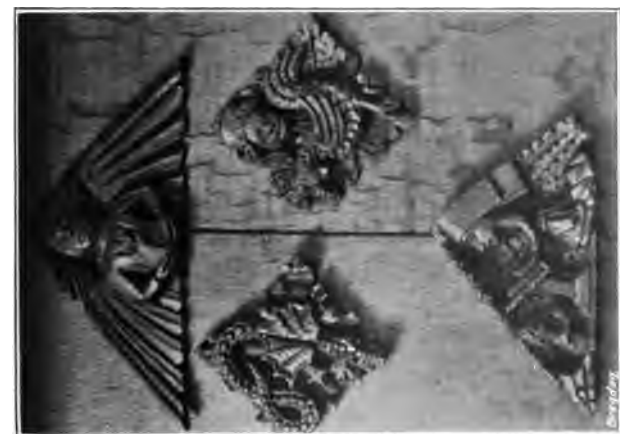
**T**WO hundred years ago, when many Bridgewater people were possessed of educational advantages which were only of the most rudimentary description, there were beliefs, ideas, and notions current amongst the inhabitants which nowadays seem to be absolutely astonishing. Many of these ideas had filtered down through many generations, and in the absence of wider knowledge they were implicitly believed. It is not the purpose to examine here what were the sources of these strange notions. They were complex, no doubt, but they were terribly real. People then were hemmed in by a dark world of mystery ; there were evil powers above and around ; nay, there were wicked influences also upon the earth, which needed, in the belief of our ancestors, all the wit and skill and knowledge of accumulated experience in order to defeat them. Some of these ideas, probably, had come down from mediæval times, when the doctrines of Purgatory were dominating the beliefs of Englishmen. In those days the dead were not allowed to slip away from outward memory so quickly as in these. There were the obits, the trentals, the anniversaries, the

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bede-roll, and other means of bringing to recollection the loved ones who had crossed the borderland. But these things were declared to be superfluous ; they were done away with, and with no small touch of scorn.

But Purgatory, however much its tenets may have been — as they undoubtedly were — exaggerated, magnified, prostituted to ignoble and mercenary ends, and generally misconstrued, had in its essence some lodging in the beliefs of men. The mystery which hangs over death was then as real and as insoluble as it is now, and as it ever will be. Ghosts, appearances, weird sounds, and strange messages from the world beyond and from those who inhabit it, were the outcome and residuum of the purgatorial view. Evil spirits abounded, and men must be protected from them. The dead might come again, and affright the living. There might be crimes to confess, and the dead must appear to some living person in order to ease himself of his burden. The law had made it illegal to pray publicly for the souls of the departed, but the law could not do away with the host of superstitions which flooded England, and which centred mainly—as they have ever done—around the belief in the influence which the dead were supposed to exert upon the living, and the possibility of communication between the next world and this.

It is not here suggested that all people were a prey to fears and superstitions of this nature ; it is, however, advanced that this was so with the majority. There were many people who in the latter half of the eighteenth century became utterly lax as to



PART OF OLD CARVED CEILING IN A HOUSE IN ST. MARY STREET

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religious obligations, and partially as to moral ones. Strangely, however, such persons as these have frequently been found to be the most superstitious of all. If the mind cannot find some rest and comfort in the legitimate knowledge which we possess of a life hereafter, and of a Divine Providence which encompasses all things, then the mind will frequently create imaginary terrors for itself.

The most deeply-rooted beliefs were naturally connected with the dead, and with the hour of death. It was the custom to leave the room in which the head of a family had died, untenanted for a long time. If the deceased had failed to make a will, or if he was believed to hold heterodox or strange religious views, the danger of his reappearance was assumed to be considerably greater. The room in which a suicide had occurred was generally nailed up, and left unused. So also the roads and by-ways were frequently haunted by terrible spectres of people who had met their death in such places. Phantom coaches and horses scoured the carriage roads, and drove noisily up to the doors of mansions. The majority of the old manor-houses possessed their ghosts, frequently the ghosts of some wicked old people who were credited with having perpetrated all sorts of villainies during their lifetime. It was natural, perhaps, that the churchyards should be believed to be places of terror by night. The Sexton or the Parson might pass through them unharmed, as being, presumably, persons exempt by their normal occupations from molestation from those at whose funerals they had officiated. Only this year (1907) a Somerset village was terribly upset by the

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appearance for several nights of an old lady, a former inhabitant, who persistently—and with great lack of propriety—walked up and down one of the by-lanes. Judge Jeffrey's ghost has, it is said, been a fairly well-behaved visitor for a long time past at a house in St. Mary's Street. But he is content with knocking at the doors of rooms, and walking in the passages, and does not show himself in his habit as he lived.

No one can wonder that Sedgemoor, and its awful scenes of 1685, have peopled the neighbourhood of Bridgwater with the ghosts of dead soldiers. The poor fugitives from that field of battle fled in every direction, some to seek safety in hiding, some to crawl away into a hedgeside to die. It was natural that these things should be fruitful in raising horrors and fears, and they assuredly were. Of the few remaining ghosts who walk the fields and lanes of the neighbourhood to-day, nearly all are "Mon-mouthers."

Witchcraft was firmly believed in for a long time, and was one of the last of superstitious notions to pass away. Bridgwater has its Witches' Walk, down in the fields below where St. Matthew's fair is held. There were three kinds of witches. Black Witches, the most diabolical of all, could do harm to people, but could never help them. White Witches were far more useful beings. They were able to cure divers diseases, and could find stolen goods which had been hidden away. But in order to gain these powers it was believed that they had sold themselves to the Devil, whose bond slaves they were. The third kind of Witch possessed both the power of helping

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people, and of doing them harm ; they were, consequently, to be treated with deference, and, if possible, to be won over to do kindly deeds for those who applied to them for aid. The ordinary Witch, it was presumed, was far more to be dreaded than to be cajoled. For, it was held, these beings were sometimes carried aloft through the air, on brooms or spits, so that they might attend at distant gatherings of the evil sisterhood. In order to achieve this it was necessary that they should first anoint themselves with magical ointment, supplied to them for that purpose by the Evil One himself. When the meeting had assembled it sometimes happened that the Devil would appear amongst them in human shape, that of a man or a woman, and then terrible feastings, horrible orgies, and dreadful bargains were enacted, and things were done of which it is not possible to write. There was dancing, and unearthly music, and sometimes a fearful exhortation or sermon was delivered by Satan, exhorting his servants to commit all sorts of crimes and wickednesses. Occasionally their evil master would beat the Witches black and blue with the broomsticks, and play all kinds of spiteful tricks upon them. For having sold themselves utterly to him, they were entirely in his power, from which they were unable to escape. Yet if any one of them repeated aloud the name of God, at that instant the entire gathering was dispersed and put to rout.

If it should happen (and it was believed that this did frequently happen) that a particular Witch desired to destroy any person to whom she bore any ill-will, or that the Devil ordered it, an image of wax was

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made, which, with many impious incantations, was baptized by him with the name of the individual to whom harm was intended. Thorns were pushed into the image, which was placed before a fire, and as the wax melted through heat, so the unhappy victim thus represented would begin to feel excruciating pains in his body, and would presently pine away in gradual decay, constantly experiencing severe torture, one symptom being the acute sensation of sharp thorns being thrust into his flesh. A less virulent form of resentment was exercised by the Witches in killing oxen and sheep, and by drying up milking-cows. Similarly they were able to restrain the brewing of beer, or the proper coming of butter in the churn. They could change themselves into various shapes, frequently assuming the form of a hare; and they could, it was alleged, render themselves invisible to their victims.

In consequence of these beliefs, many means were adopted which were believed to be efficacious, or partly efficacious, against these wicked ones. Thus if a Witch were pricked, so as to draw blood, her power over her victim was annulled if the blood appeared before any actual spell had been performed. This might be done on behalf of another, as for a child by its parent, if care was taken to say aloud that the intention was to protect the child. Witches, if not known to be such, could be detected in various ways. A supposed Witch might be weighed against the Church Bible, and if she were guilty, the Bible would weigh her down. Or, she might be urged to attempt to say the Lord's Prayer, which no Witch was believed able to say correctly

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through, without omitting some clause. Neither could she weep more than three tears, and these only out of the left eye. Two other means were also available for her detection; the thatch of her house might be burnt, or an animal supposed to be bewitched by her might be burnt; either of these methods was sufficient to extort from her a confession of guilt. Yet another very cruel method might be used. It was called *Swimming the Witch*. The wretched woman was to be stripped naked; her right thumb bound to the left toe, and her left thumb to the right toe, then she was thrown into a river or a pond. If guilty, it was held, she would be unable to sink. The cause of this was that by reason of her agreement with Satan she was believed to have for ever renounced the benefits of the Water of Baptism. Similarly the water would now renounce her, and would refuse to receive her into its bosom. Thus, if the poor creature sank—thus proving her innocence—she might be drowned; if she floated, she was guilty, and was deserving of death. Friday was the most favourable day for Witches to confess their guilt. And there were other means, even less creditable, for fastening the irremovable stigma of guilt upon them.

A quaint direction is given in an old eighteenth-century book as to what the behaviour of people should be when they chance to meet a Witch in their walks abroad. "On meeting a supposed Witch, it is advisable to take the wall of her in a town or street, and the right hand of her in a lane or field; and, whilst passing her, to clench both hands, doubling the thumbs beneath the fingers; this will prevent

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her having a power to injure the person so doing at the time. It is well to salute a Witch with civil words, on meeting her, before she speaks. But no presents of apples, eggs, or any other thing, should be received from her on any account."<sup>1</sup>

It may possibly be thought that such crude beliefs as these were the possession only of the vulgar and the uneducated. Yet it was not so. They permeated all classes of society. The statute which was enacted in 1603 directed that "Any one that shall use, practise, or exercise any invocation or conjuration of any evill or wicked spirit, or consult, covenant with, entertaine or employ, feede or reward, any evill or wicked spirit, to or for any intent or purpose; or take up any dead man, woman, or child, out of his, her, or their grave, or any other place where the dead body resteth, or the skin, bone, or other part of any dead person, to be employed or used in any manner of witchcraft, sorcery, charme, or enchantment; or shall use, practice, or exercise any witchcraft, sorcery, charme, or enchantment, whereby any person shall be killed, destroyed, wasted, consumed, pined, or lamed, in his or her body, or any part thereof, such offenders, duly and lawfully convicted and attainted, shall suffer death. If any person shall take upon him, by witchcraft, enchantment, charme, or sorcery, to tell or declare in what place any treasure of gold or silver should or might be found or had in the earth, or other secret places, or where goods or things lost or stolne should be found or become; or to the

<sup>1</sup> Grose's *Glossary, and Superstitions*, published in High Holborn, 1787.

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intent to provoke any person to unlawful love ; or whereby any cattell or goods of any person shall be destroyed, wasted, or impaired ; or to destroy or hurt any person in his or her body, though the same be not effected ; a yeare's imprisonment and pillory, and the second conviction, death." This Statute was not repealed until King George the First's reign, and the ideas which it embodies were current, and were approved by the multitude, for many years after.

A writer of some fame in his day, Joseph Glanvill of Plymouth, an Oxford graduate, came to be somewhat of an authority on witches. He was a clergyman, and became Vicar of Frome in 1662, afterwards removing to the Rectory of Street, near Glastonbury. He held the Rectory of Bath Abbey, in the north aisle of which famous church he was buried. Glanvill was rather an erratic thinker, as may be seen by his *Philosophical Considerations touching the Being of Witches and Witchcraft*, and his posthumous work, *Sadducismus Triumphatus*. His belief in witchcraft was very strong. If the existence of Witches were disproved, he urged, all spiritual existence vanished with them. The old, old fallacy ! No process of reasoning can be more fatal than that which retains some belief or superstition because, if it be not retained, some other belief or superstition must fall with it. John Wesley, however, fell into the same logical error. He wrote : " It is true likewise that the English in general, and indeed most of the men of learning in Europe, have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions as mere old wives' fables. I am sorry for it, and I willingly take this oppor-

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tunity of entering my solemn protest against this violent compliment which so many that believe the Bible pay to those who do not believe it. I owe them no such service. I take knowledge that these are at the bottom of the outcry which has been raised, and with such insolence spread through the land in direct opposition not only to the Bible, but to the suffrage of the wisest and best of men in all ages and nations. They well know (whether Christians know it or not) that the giving up witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible." It may be added that the men whom Wesley was attacking were not denying the truth of witchcraft and its reality in the days of the Hebrews (as the Bible relates); they were attacking its modern counterfeits and brutalities. Wesley several times visited Bridgwater, good and earnest man that he was. One wonders if he ever spoke on witchcraft in the old town. Probably not: he had better things to tell.

It is not necessary to allude to the terrible accusations which were set up against many innocent and blameless people, on the charge of dealing with evil spirits, and with witchcraft. Hundreds lost their lives. It was so easy to accuse, so hard to disprove. The ruffian Matthew Hopkins, in the middle of the seventeenth century, made a tour of the Eastern Counties as "Witchfinder-General." Hundreds of unhappy women were cruelly maltreated, and many were put to death. Hopkins was himself *swum* and hanged in 1647. One poor clergyman, advanced in years, was accused, and the torture was applied to him. In his agony he was made to say that he had held dealings with two Satanic imps,

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to sink a ship. He was executed, and was made to read the burial service for himself just before he was put to death. The last trial for witchcraft in England, it is stated, was at Hereford in 1712. The victim, Jane Wenham, was found guilty, but she was not executed. Even the able and distinguished Sir Matthew Hale believed in the power of Witches, and in 1664 tried and condemned two women for bewitching children. Professor William Forbes, a legal authority in Glasgow, defined witchcraft as "that black art whereby strange and wonderful things are wrought by a power derived from the Devil." He wrote: "Nothing seems plainer to me than that there may be and have been Witches, and that perhaps such are now actually existing." This was in 1730. The last execution in Scotland, it is recorded, took place at Dornoch in 1722, where a poor old woman perished for having ridden her own daughter, transformed into a pony. The pony was shod by the Devil, which made the girl lame in hands and feet ever after, as well as her son after her. It was cold weather, and the poor creature sat quietly warming herself by the fire which was to burn her, waiting for her hour to come. Not until 1736 were the statutes against witchcraft finally repealed in Scotland. Even then their abolition was strongly disapproved in many quarters. The leading seceders from the Church of Scotland, in 1743, made an enumeration of certain national and personal sins. In the list was inserted "as also the penal statutes against witches having been repealed by parliament, contrary to the express law of God; for which a holy God may be provoked in a way of righteous

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judgment to leave those who are already ensnared to be hardened more and more ; and to permit Satan to tempt and seduce others to the same dangerous and wicked snare." Few superstitions died a harder death than witchcraft. And unhappily the belief in it brought horrible cruelties upon those who were deemed to be guilty. The accusers seemed to think they were pleasing God by their inhumanities to Witches. It was the process of the Spanish Inquisition over again. People's bodies were to be tortured so that their souls, or others' souls, might be saved. There is no cruelty like the cruelty of superstition. Two such divergent bodies of men as the Inquisitors of Spain, and the seceding members of the Scottish Kirk, joined hands over it. It was a drag upon eighteenth-century progress, and it made men hard.

There was also a lighter and far more innocent side to the quaint notions of those who came before us in Somerset. Many beliefs which were tenaciously held did no one any harm, and they gave just that touch of the marvellous which served to spice the dulness of every-day careers. A few of these may be mentioned. Fairies were supposed to be a sort of intermediate race of beings between spirits and men. Their stature was extremely diminutive, and their complexions were fair. There were male and female fairies ; they were usually clad in green, and were wont to haunt the south sides of hills and mountains, and to disport themselves in groves. They loved the meadows, wherein they danced in the fairy circles on the grass. Their characteristics were very human ; they would reward cleanly and comely servants by placing money in their shoes,

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while sluts and slovens were severely pinched. They were apt to change their elves, or children, if weak, for the stronger children of ordinary mortals, but this could only be achieved before baptism. Hence it was sometimes necessary to watch carefully by the cradles of infants until after their baptism.

Here is a story concerning the changing of children by the fairies, taken from an old book, *A pleasant Treatise on Witchcraft*. "A certain woman having put out her child to nurse in the country, found, when she came to take it home, that its form was so much altered that she scarce knew it: nevertheless, not knowing what time might do, took it home for her own. But when, after some years, it could neither speak nor go, the poor woman was fain to carry it, with much trouble, in her arms: and one day, a poor man coming to the door, 'God bless you, Mistress,' said he, 'and your poor child; be pleased to bestow something on a poor man.' 'Ah, this child,' replied she, 'is the cause of all my sorrow,' and related what had happened, adding, moreover, that she thought it changed, and none of her child. The old man, whom years had rendered more prudent in such matters, told her, that, to find out the truth, she should make a clear fire, sweep the hearth very clean, and place the child fast in his chair, that he might not fall, before it; then break a dozen eggs, and place the four-and-twenty half shells before it; then go out, and listen at the door: for, if the child spoke, it was certainly a changeling: and then she should carry it out, and leave it on the dunghill to cry, and not to pity it, till she heard its voice no more. The woman,

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having done all things according to these words, heard the child say, 'Seven years old was I before I came to the nurse, and four years have I lived since, and never saw so many milk-pans before.' So the woman took it up, and left it upon the dung-hill to cry, and not to be pitied; till at last she thought the voice went up into the air : and coming, found there her own natural and well-favoured child."

There were also omens, well known to the wise of those days. Thus a dog howling at night outside the house indicated a speedy death in the family, and a screech-owl flapping its wings against the windows of a sick person's chamber foretold his coming end. Three clear knocks at the bed-head or at the door of a sick chamber indicated approaching death; so also did the gnawing of rats at the hangings of the bedroom. To break a looking-glass meant death for one in the house, presumably the master. A coal shaped like a coffin (this must surely have been an exceeding rarity), if it flew out of the fire upon the hearth, betokened death, as did also the rising up of a little heap of tallow against the wick of a candle, usually termed a winding-sheet. Special families were privileged to have special warnings of death, sometimes by the appearance of a particular bird. Others were warned by what must have been an exceedingly unpleasant visitation, that is to say, by the figure of a tall woman dressed all in white, who ran shrieking about the house. It was unlucky if a child, at Baptism, did not cry when sprinkled with the water, for it betokened his early death. Children who were prematurely wise, also,

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were not destined to grow up. Mr. Grose gives a quaint little note on this. "Fond parents are, however," he writes, "apt to terrify themselves on this occasion without any great cause: witness the mother who gave us an instance of the uncommon sense of her boy, of only six years of age, that he having laid his dear little hand on a red-hot poker, took it away without any one soul alive bidding him."

The number of portents indicating death were very numerous: enough, probably, have already been mentioned. Marriage also was heralded at times. An unmarried woman who fasted on Midsummer Eve, and at midnight laid a clean cloth with bread, cheese, and ale, and sitting down as if going to eat, the street-door being left open—the man who was to be her future husband would come into the room. He would drink to her by bowing, and afterwards filling the glass, would leave it on the table, retiring with another bow. On St. Agnes night, January the 21st, maidens might know their future lot. They must take a row of pins, and pull out each one separately in turn, saying a Pater-noster on sticking a pin in their sleeve. They would then dream of the man whom they would afterwards marry. The night of the first new Moon after New Year's Day was also propitious. The maiden must go out of doors in the evening, and stand over the bars of a gate. Looking steadfastly at the Moon, she must say aloud—

All hail to the Moon ! all hail to thee !  
I prithee, good Moon, reveal to me  
This night, who my husband must be.

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Returning indoors to bed, her future husband would appear to her in a dream, clad in the uniform or garb befitting his occupation.

It was also lucky to do or to experience certain things. It was lucky to tumble upstairs, to put on a stocking the wrong side outwards, and to spit (this use obtained especially amongst pedlars) upon the first piece of money received each day for goods sold. It was lucky for the sailors to have children on board a ship, and also for a man when going on a journey, to see a sow cross the road attended by a litter of pigs. On the other hand it was unlucky to walk under a ladder; to kill a swallow, a robin, or a wren; to lay down one's knife and fork crosswise; to wash hands in the same bason with another person, seeing that a quarrel between the two would ensue; to enter upon any new enterprise upon a Friday; to scatter the salt; or, more especially, to drown a cat at sea.

Two customs, differing widely from the above, may be noticed here. One was the use of the Passing Bell. The purpose of this was two-fold. First it was, as was most natural, to ask the prayers of good Christian folk for the departing soul. Secondly, it was to drive away the evil spirits which stood at the foot of the bed ready to seize their prey, or to molest the soul's free passage. By ringing the bell these spirits were kept away, for evil spirits were in great dread of the sound of Church Bells. If the greatest bell in the tower could be tolled, so much the better, for that being louder, the spirits must fain flee farther away to avoid hearing it. "The evill spirytes doubte moche when they here the bells rongen: and this is the cause why the

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belles ben rongen whan it thondreth, & whan grete tempeste & outrages of wether happen, to the end that the feindes & wycked spirytes shold be abashed & flee, & cease of the movynge of tempeste." The other custom is the very usual one of taking off the hat on meeting a funeral procession. This indicates nowadays, presumably, the outward indication of respect for the majesty of Death. But in the eighteenth century or earlier the custom was observed for the purpose of keeping in good humour all the evil spirits who, it was believed, attended the body of the dead.

Many of the ideas and beliefs which are here alluded to are common to other parts of England, and the number of them might be largely increased. Such notions have always lingered longest in country districts, and in places where people mostly stay at home. In Somerset they abounded, and some still survive. The clang and vigour of large modern towns are inimical to such conceptions; the quick movement of residents, their constant change of house and home, the brisk interchange of thought between minds of varying capacity and of the most divergent mental experiences, combine to militate against beliefs which need for their perpetuation some isolation, some superstition, and some inherited prejudices. Modern life in the great centres of population has supplied all these solvents to such antiquated modes of thought; thus many notions which our ancestors dearly cherished have passed away as a morning cloud. Some have passed away because fuller knowledge has shown the impossibility of retaining them; some have vanished

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without any adequate reason, save that the fashion of men's thinking changes ; some have died because they deserved to die.

As regards the relation of such beliefs to the Christian faith, it may be said that they mostly stood outside it. Thousands of devout Christians believed in these astonishing tenets, and clung to them. The beliefs themselves neither helped nor hindered any man's faith. They provided a link with the unseen and the unknown which was very real ; many sceptics shared in the superstitions of two hundred years ago. Most of all, perhaps, the growth of literature and the ample supply of books, since then, have changed men's mental outlook. "When I became a man, I put away childish things."

## CHAPTER IV

### SEVENTEEN HUNDRED AND FORTY-FIVE

AS soon as King George the First was comfortably settled upon his throne, and the Whig party had come into power, it became a matter of concern to the Earl of Oxford and to Viscount Bolingbroke as to what their fate might be. They had been scheming vigorously for the restoration of the Stuarts, and now the Hanoverian had come in. They had not long to wait. Both men were impeached for high treason. Oxford soon afterwards practically disappeared from history ; not so Bolingbroke. His situation was a desperate one, but he was ever a man of resource. Putting a bold front on matters, he went about amongst his friends, chatted, affected to make light of the crisis, and plunged into social amenities. One evening late in March, 1715, he went to Drury Lane Theatre, witnessed the performance, and arranged to be at the theatre again on the following evening. That night he adopted a disguise, rushed off to Dover, thence across to Calais, and to Paris, where he flung in his lot with James, the Stuart claimant to the throne. The Duke of Ormond was also there. In due course Norroy King of Arms went down to the

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House of Lords, and struck off the names of Ormond and of Bolingbroke from the roll of peers. Bolingbroke affected to jest about the matter. His new King, James of St. Germain's, created him an Earl. Ludicrous as the whole thing was, it was also serious. Bolingbroke—now raised from an English Viscount to a St. Germain's Earldom—became Secretary of State to James, and gave himself up to Jacobite scheming.

At this stage Bridgwater came very near to being drawn into the Stuart net. For Ormond, whose influence in the West of England was great, was urged to join in a Stuart rising there, towards which some preliminary plans had already been made. The details of this Western Counties plot will probably never be completely known. Yet it proceeded as far as to induce Ormond to take ship, and sail from the coast of France to the south of Devonshire, in the hope of finding the nucleus of a body of Jacobite enthusiasts ready to strike a blow for James. He found no such thing, and promptly returned to France, whence the Chevalier was setting sail for the Scottish coast. There is a great difference between following the leader of a movement, and following his lieutenant. If James Francis had landed in Devon himself, the story of Bridgwater would have to be re-written, and possibly the story of the Stuarts too. He did not; and the effort of 1715 ended in a fiasco. The Bridgwater Jacobites must, they felt, possess their souls in patience, and wait for better days.

So Bridgwater went on its quiet way under the two first Georges, and the authorities contrived to

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keep it in all outward appearances a loyal town. George the First could speak no English, and his heart was always in Hanover rather than in England. He was glad to avail himself of the additional glory and status which the Sovereignty of Great Britain gave to him, yet he was ever relieved to be away in his Hanoverian home. He was wise enough not to meddle seriously or officiously in English affairs, and he allowed his ministers to do most of the governing. But towards the end his excesses in eating and drinking, his love for punch, and his generally erratic mode of living proved too much for a man who was drawing very near to seventy years of age. In June, 1727, he set out on what proved to be his last visit to Hanover. An attack—believed to be one of paralysis—seized him on the way, yet he continued to cry aloud in commanding tones the words "Osnabruck! Osnabruck!" So to Osnabruck, the home of his brother the Prince-Bishop, his terrified attendants hurried him. When the royal coach clattered into the courtyard they found the old King lying dead in his seat. In his will he is said to have left a large sum of money to his mistress, the Duchess of Kendal, and to other ladies. The Archbishop of Canterbury got possession of the will, and gave it to the new King. George the Second pocketed it, and the will disappeared, never to be heard of again. He had always hated his father, and his father bore no love to him.

The second George possessed one advantage over his father ; he could speak English. No one could, however, have called him either attractive or worthy.

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"He was avaricious ; he was parsimonious ; he was easily put out of temper," as some one truly said of him. "His instincts, feelings, and passions were all purely selfish." These things, however regrettable in themselves, might not, it may be thought, have been of any great moment, seeing that he was King, and secure. They did, as it turned out, matter very much indeed. No Sovereign who has not some personal hold upon the affection of his subjects can, at least in England, count for much. It was just the moment when a popular English King was very sorely needed. This George was very soon to find out.

The hubbub all arose, as was usual in those days, about the Stuarts. The method of its development was, however, a little complicated, and it needs a few moments' unravelling. At this period the Test Acts, in some of their various applications and restrictions, were in full force. One of the Acts provided that all magistrates should take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, as well as an oath renouncing the doctrine that it is lawful to take arms against the King. These officers were also bound to receive the Communion according to the rites of the Church of England within a year before their election. Another Act required that these conditions should bind holders of all public offices, civil and military, and also that the same individuals must abjure all belief in the doctrine of transubstantiation. It was through the meshes of the nets of these Acts that the doctrine and practice of what is known as Occasional Conformity had crept. Originally, long years before, there had been many

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moderate Dissenters—men of the highest possible character—who were removed by the very least distance from the doctrinal position of the Church of England. They would attend at the Church Communion now and then, and would thus maintain a partial connection with the old Church. Thus they were eligible for public office, yet great numbers would not have received the Communion in order merely to qualify themselves for such a distinction. On the other hand, the unhappy Test Acts came in and spoilt all. They prescribed that certain men *must* receive the Communion, and take certain oaths, before admission to office. Thus a sacramental test came to be, with not a few, the means and the road to public recognition. A man might present himself at his parish church at the Holy Communion, being in every sense of the phrase a devout Communicant, and a sincerely earnest Christian man. He was eligible for public positions. Again, another man, in no sense either earnest or devout, might similarly present himself to receive the Sacrament. He also would be eligible for public position. Who could distinguish between the one motive and the other? It placed, outwardly, the sincere worshipper on a par with the mere man of the world, who was ready to use any religious rite so as to attain his end. The Test Acts brought endless trouble; they were a hardship on the Dissenters, and a hardship on the Church of England too. Never was a device more ill-advised, or more odious in principle.

In 1712 came another turn of the screw. A measure against Occasional Conformity was passed,

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under the title "An Act for preserving the Protestant Religion by better securing the Church of England as by law established." This Act aimed at discouraging Dissent, primarily; and at prohibiting any manifestation in favour of the Stuarts, in the second place. It was a very harsh and unwise measure. The means adopted were these. Any person, whether he had occasionally conformed or not, who held a corporation or government office, was disqualified under the Act if he afterwards attended a meeting of a conventicle. A conventicle was described as being a gathering of ten or more persons, occupied in religious worship other than that authorised by the Prayer Book. And even if the Prayer Book were used at such conventicle, the full penalty must be enforced if the prayer for the Princess Sophia (the Electress of Hanover and heir-presumptive to the English Crown) were omitted. Thus the Stuarts were held to be past praying for.

Meanwhile, in Bridgwater and in many other English towns, the Stuart tide was rising. It rose in spite of all sorts of precautions and hindrances. William the Third had been burnt in effigy long ago, in several places. When the Loyalists met together (as they did pretty regularly, for it was highly politic to do so) to keep the birthday of their King, they were frequently assailed by mobs, who would assemble outside and sing all sorts of Jacobite songs. As we have seen, this was no unfrequent occurrence in Bridgwater. "The little gentleman in black velvet" would be toasted, although poor King William had lain in his grave now for some years. The health of a mysterious individual known as Job

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was boisterously drunk; Job not being the Biblical personage of renown for his patience, but a combination of the initials of the three names James, Ormond, and Bolingbroke. "Kit," another popular toast, stood for King James III; "the three B's" signified "Best Born Briton," or the Chevalier de St. George. So the feeling grew, and on June 10th, the Chevalier's birthday, the scenes of revelry grew frantic. The authorities had to wink at it; no doubt the Bridgwater rulers discreetly did so too.

All this had been going on for years, when, in 1720, an event occurred which made the Jacobites simply wild with delight. James Francis Stuart, the rejected of 1715, had in the course of his travels met the beautiful and romantic Clementine Sobieski, and married her. She bore him a son, the famous Prince Charles Edward. The child was born in Rome, in the presence of many Cardinals from the great European powers, and amidst the greatest signs of rejoicing. It was just what was wanted. James Francis could never lead a cause, but now there was an heir. He, surely, should bring the Stuarts back to their own again. He would grow up strong and handsome and brave and true. He would restore the sad fortunes of his House. His father had tried, and failed. But young Charles would not fail. He had only to bide his time. Thus reasoned the enthusiastic followers of that exiled and unhappy race.

The Test Acts and Occasional Conformity left their mark upon Bridgwater, and some of their consequences are detailed in the old documents of the place. There are many rolls of papers dating

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from the eighteenth century, relating the working of these Acts, and of some other legal enactments. A vellum roll, dating from July 12th, 1723, to March 28th, 1725, gives a list of those persons who were fined for profane swearing, at the General Sessions of the Peace, in the Borough and Parish of Bridgwater. These were recorded before Edward Raymond, Mayor for that year. There is a draft of "the Laws, Statutes, Ordinances, and Decrees founded, constituted, ordained, made and established" in the year 1729 by the Mayor, Recorder, and Aldermen of the Borough of Bridgwater "for the better government of the Goldsmiths, Tanners, Ropemakers, Upholsterers, White-Bakers, Tallow-Chandlers and others within the Borough." A Register of Record exists containing the names of those who personally appeared in the Court of the King, at the Town Quarter Sessions, "who took and subscribed three several oaths of allegiance to the King" (George the Second), and who also signed an abjuration of "the pretended King James the Third." A large parcel of certificates is in existence, granted by the Minister and Churchwardens of the Parish Church of Bridgwater, showing that "the persons who are severally named in the respective documents received the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper after Divine Service and Sermon, according to the usage of the Church of England." This most interesting collection of papers bears various dates, ranging from 1728 to 1777.

There is also another collection of papers which can here be alluded to only with the strictest brevity, which, could we but know all the story which they

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imply, would be of the most profound interest. They are parcels of affidavits, depositions, and other documents relating to "the dealings of the townspeople with the various regiments quartered at Bridgwater," having special reference to "acts and words of disloyalty to the Crown, and a favour to the Stuart Pretender." These papers have also another revelation to make. They speak of "the unwillingness of persons in office to take the oaths of allegiance, or to attend Divine Service in Protestant places of worship." They vary in date from 1717 to 1755. In 1720 William Luffe was elected a Capital Burgess of the Borough, by the Mayor and other authorities in Common Council, and it is carefully recorded that "he took the oaths appointed." In the same year Davidge Gould was duly elected and admitted to be a freeman and Common Burgess. He also "was duly sworn." When the important office of gaol-keeper became vacant on October 14th, 1720, John Mounshiere of Bridgwater and two other gentlemen were called upon to unite in giving a bond of a thousand pounds to Samuel Smith and Matthew Criddle, the Bailiffs of the Borough, for the due performance of the duties of the post by the new custodian. There are also numerous cases of men surrendering public office. Samuel Darby, Schoolmaster of the Grammar School, resigns his office of Capital Burgess in 1703. John Everard had done the same thing in 1682. Other similar instances abound.

One quaint little document—dating from before the days of Queen Anne—is of interest in a different way. It is a grant by Gabriel Barber of the City of

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London, gentleman, "appoynted for the Councill of Virginia," to the Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses of Bridgwater of the sum of fifty pounds "for the use and behoofe of tenn religious and honest handy craftsmen, tradesmen, Burgesses, and inhabytantes within the said Burrough, being noe Innkeepers neither Alehouse keepers neyther in sciree or retayner to any person, to be lent to every of them five pounds a peece for the better mayntenance of their craft or trade: and the Mayor and Burgesses hereby consent to carry out the conditions of the above grant, each of five pounds to be lent for a term of three years, sufficient sureties or pledges being taken from each recipient for the repayment of the money at the end of the term, without interest." This grant is dated 1620. Four years earlier Christopher Francklyn of Bridgwater, yeoman, resigned his office of crier in the Borough of Bridgwater, "granted to him for one year with such fees, tolle, wages and other duties as the cryer or cryers in tymes past (and tyme out of mynde) have annually hadd, received and taken in the Faires and markets within the said Borough."

Some of these documents bear testimony to the unsettled condition of things in the town in the eighteenth century. There was, it is evident, much local uneasiness as to the government of England, and how long it was likely to last under the Georges. Parliamentary rule had come in, but that alone did not satisfy the people. They wanted a King whom they could respect, or at any rate like in some measure. No one liked George the Second. All these elements of unrest made the Jacobites espec-





PART OF OLD CARVED CEILING IN A HOUSE  
IN ST. MARY STREET

*Facing page 67*

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ally—and others inferentially—cast their longing looks across the water to where young Prince Charles was only waiting to sally forth to regain for himself and for his posterity the throne which his grandfather had lost, and from which his House was now excluded by his enemies, by the Hanoverian dynasty, and by bitter fate.

Then came 1745. Charles had grown up to early manhood ; even at the siege of Gaeta in 1734—when a mere boy—he had shown undeniable proofs of real valour. He was, and long had been, on fire to conquer England for himself. At his own risk, against the advice of those who assured him that without at least six thousand troops, and a handsome sum of money, it was useless to expect the Scottish clans to rally to his call, he set out from France. In spite of all, he did inspire the Scottish clansmen. His proclamation, calling upon all persons to follow him as Regent acting on behalf of his father, and promising the soldiers of King George a free pardon if they would march with him under the Stuart colours, had its effect. After some natural hesitation at first, his friends poured in, and the faithful clansmen swore to support him. His crimson and white banner was set up in the Vale of Glenfinnan, and all promised well. Everything seemed to be in his favour. Sir John Cope, who led the Royalist forces in Scotland, made every conceivable blunder that a commander could make, and Charles first entered Perth in triumph, and then pressed on to Edinburgh. The Scottish capital had plenty of Jacobites within its walls, and soon Bonnie Prince Charlie was holding high revel within the

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walls of Holyrood Palace, receiving the loyal obeisance of his subjects, and gaining new friends and new comrades each succeeding hour. The Scottish chivalry received him as their King; everywhere was seen the white cockade; surely the luck of the Stuarts had turned, and their hour of triumph was to come at last!

Southward he pushed, and he was right in doing so. Carlisle was gained, then Manchester, then Derby. Now he was only one hundred and twenty-seven miles from London, with victory almost within his grasp. In the English capital there was panic and dismay. The poor old Duke of Newcastle was thinking of joining the Stuart cause; the Hanoverian party lay in bewilderment; even King George, stolid being that he was, had made preparation, if need should arise, to flee to Hanover and leave England and her troubles to herself. Then Charles' evil star rose in the ascendant, and never set. Some madness made him accept the fatal advice to retreat from Derby. Sullenly and sadly he turned his horse's head northward, and lost all. Never was a man so near to gaining England, and fame, and glory, and in all human probability the English Crown, than the unfortunate and unwise Prince who listened to the counsels of hesitation when all was prospering, and who in that fatal moment ruined his splendid opportunity. Culloden followed; then disaster, then flight; then the bitter landing on the shores of Brittany. He might have been—at least for a time, and possibly for his lifetime—King Charles the Third of England. He flung away his chance, and it never came again.

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The Jacobite cause in England henceforth was dead.

All this was far away from Bridgwater, and our men had no opportunity of joining in the fray. News travelled so slowly then ; no one here had a chance of rallying to the crimson and white standard. Well it was that it ended thus. The Stuarts possessed a personal fascination which many men found to be almost irresistible ; they cast a glamour over their most reckless enterprises. Yet they lacked stability, and most of the qualities which go to make rulers and leaders of men. Many a tear, doubtless, was secretly and sorrowfully shed in our town for Prince Charles, after the day of his disastrous failure. His followers wept for him ; they could do no more. It was the last Stuart attempt ; it had failed miserably. The Hanoverian dynasty was now firmly seated on the English throne, and no further effort was made to dislodge it. Probably Bridgwater, with some other towns, was cured of its Jacobitism. The Royalists might henceforth keep the King's birthday at the *Swan* without disturbance, and the toast-list would need neither scrutiny nor revision.

## CHAPTER V

### GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON.—I

OF all the members who have represented the town of Bridgwater in the nation's Parliament, none can compare in notoriety with George Bubb Dodington. It would, perhaps, be hardly fair to call him a typical politician of the eighteenth century, for there were some upright and honest men in those corrupt days. The majority of public men, however, had one ideal ; it was to get on, and to make money or position, or both. Patriotism, in its noblest sense, was then mostly a sickly and drooping plant. It was too frequently overshadowed by grosser growths. The pushing, the unscrupulous, the time-server, and the schemer were apt to succeed where the upright man was likely to fail. It was probably untrue that Walpole said, as was alleged, that every man had his price. But it would have been true to say that a great many men had, and also that in the secret counsels of their party cabals they would have unblushingly admitted it.

A very able writer has summed up the position of things then, with an incisive pen indeed, yet with truthfulness. "It seemed," he says, "as if the English people, so devoted to faction in their earlier

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days, were sinking into absolute indifference. The only event which occupied a session was the alteration of the calendar; and the nation enjoyed a halcyon period, during which such strange creatures as Bubb Dodington and his like intrigued and disported themselves on the surface of politics for the edification of the universe. The symptoms of a change, however, were manifesting themselves; and the outbreak of the seven years' war had ominous meanings not as yet obvious to the world." The writer then proceeds to refer to Brown's *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times*. This book, he declares, was one "the popularity of which appeared to contemporaries to be a significant symptom. It is a vigorous indictment against the English nation. Admitting that his countrymen have still some spirit of liberty, some humanity, and some equity, he argues that their chief characteristic is a vain, luxurious, and selfish effeminacy. At our schools the pupils learn words not things; university professorships are sinecures; on the grand tour, our young men learn foreign vices without widening their minds; we go to dinner in chairs, not on horseback, and spend money on foreign cookery instead of plain English fare; conversation is trivial or vicious; for solid literature we read silly plays, novels, and periodicals, though, amidst the general decay of taste and learning, one great writer, to wit Warburton, bestrides the narrow world like a Colossus; the fine arts are depraved; opera and pantomime have driven Shakespeare into the background; our principles are as bad as our manners; religion is universally ridiculed, and yet our irreligi-

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gion is shallow; Bolingbroke is neglected, not because he is impious, but because he fills five quarto volumes, whilst Hume's flimsy essays may amuse a breakfast table; honour has gone with religion; we laugh at our vices as represented on the stage, and repeat them at home without a blush; public spirit has declined till a minister is regarded as a prodigy for simply doing his duty; and if the domestic affections are not extinct, we may doubt whether their survival is not another proof of our effeminacy."<sup>1</sup> This indictment is indeed a scathing one. Englishmen have always been noted for their readiness to find fault with their own times and with themselves. Perhaps it may be a healthy sign. At any rate it is certain that there was plenty to complain of in the time which was then under consideration.

George Bubb Dodington, who was born in 1691, was not directly descended from the old family of the Dodingtons of Dodington, in Somerset. A John Dodington who died in 1683, and who held an office under Thurloe, had married Hester, the daughter of Sir Peter Temple. By her he had a son George Dodington, who died in 1720, and who was a lord of the Admiralty in George the First's time. He had also a daughter, who was married to Jeremias Bubb, whose antecedents are not very evident. Bubb has been variously described, as "an Irish fortune-hunter," and also as "an apothecary from Weymouth or Carlisle." Jeremias and Hester Bubb had a son, George Bubb, who afterwards became member for Bridgwater. His descent from

<sup>1</sup> Leslie Stephen's *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. II, pp. 195, 196.

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the Dodington family is thus only through the female line.

George Bubb was, it is surmised, at Oxford, and there gained such education as was usually acquired by the young men of the day. He was ever shrewd, but never profound. He had, however, some interest at his back, and in 1715, at the age of twenty-four, was elected Member for the old Borough of Winchelsea, a safe seat well under the control of his family. In the course of the same year he was sent out to Spain on some diplomatic business as envoy extraordinary, and remained there till 1717. The real commencement of his career was, however, in 1720, when the death of his uncle, George Dodington, put him in possession of a splendid estate. At this stage of his career he ceased to be George Bubb, and became George Bubb Dodington. In 1721 he was made Lord Lieutenant of Somerset, and in the following year sat for Bridgwater as member, for the first time. The names of the Bridgwater members just at this period are rather confusing. A George Dodington—one of the old family—was returned as member for the Borough in 1708, 1710, and 1714. In 1720 he died, and the seat being vacant was filled in 1722 by George Bubb, the new man who now succeeded to his uncle's property, and who became the George Bubb Dodington of later fame. Thus of the eight elections in Bridgwater won by Dodingtons between 1708 and 1747, three were won by the old George Dodington, and five by the later George Dodington, who entered the world with the patronymic Bubb. It is the latter with whom this chapter has to deal.

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Gifted with a manner of considerable assurance, possessed of ample means, and having a safe seat in the House of Commons, Dodington set about to fashion his career. He quickly gained recognition. In 1724 he succeeded Henry Pelham as a Lord of the Treasury, and he also had the sinecure of the clerkship of the pells in Ireland. His first care was to find out the man whom he should follow. Walpole seemed to be the most promising, and him accordingly he cultivated. But soon came a hankering in his mind for higher game, and, abusing Walpole, he laid siege to Frederick Prince of Wales, hoping to ingratiate himself with the heir to the throne. The alliance lasted for a while, but the influence of others was strong enough to oust him from the Prince's favour in 1734, and thereupon he tried to cast in his fortunes with the Duke of Argyle. Shortly afterwards the Prince made a determined struggle to have his allowance from the civil list raised from £50,000 to £100,000. He approached Dodington on the matter, but the latter, hesitating to join the Prince's party, voted against the measure, which Pulteney proposed, but which was lost. Very shortly afterwards the Duke of Argyle and Walpole separated, and Dodington, following the former, had to vacate his post at the Treasury. Walpole's power came to an end in 1742, yet Dodington did not gain by the retirement of his old leader, whom he had bitterly attacked. Indeed, his conduct brought him, deservedly, into great ill favour. It was getting to be seen that he possessed no real loyalty, and that no man could depend upon his word.

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Then came the triumph of the Pelhams, the "Broad-bottomed ministry" as it was called. Dodington's turn came again. Pelham made him Treasurer of the Navy, and various members of the Prince of Wales's following also received their reward in sundry offices under the Government. Quickly upon this, in March, 1749, came one of the vital moments in his career. The Prince of Wales made up his mind to overlook Dodington's former desertion, and determined to approach the member for Bridgwater with the view of securing his services. It was a momentous decision which the latter had to make, and the story had better be told in his own words.

Happily at this interesting stage of our member's political life a document is available which supplies us with information at first hand. This is his famous Diary, which was published by Henry Penruddocke Wyndham in 1784. Dodington, at his death, left all his property to his cousin, Thomas Wyndham of Hammersmith. Thomas Wyndham in his will left "to Henry Penruddocke Wyndham all my books, and all the late Lord Melcombe's political papers, letters, and poems, requesting of him not to print or publish any of them but those that are proper to be made publick, and such only as may, in some degree, do honour to his memory." How the possessor of the Diary could decide to publish it, is certainly strange. In his preface he admits that it (i.e., the Diary) "shews Dodington's political conduct (however palliated by the ingenuity of his pen) to have been wholly directed by the base motives of avarice, vanity, and selfishness. What, besides these

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motives," he asks, "induced him to quit the service of George the Second, and to prefer the protection of Frederick, Prince of Wales, to that of his old master? Alas! He could not then foresee the black cloud which was preparing to obscure the expected glory of the rising sun, and to blast the hopes of all its worshippers."

The *Diary* is quaintly dedicated (not by its writer, but by its possessor at the time of publication, after Dodington's death) to "that man, whenever he may appear, who, blessed with a soul superior to all lucrative and ambitious views, will dare to stand forth the generous advocate and benevolent protector of the public welfare. Who, when in office, will make the good of his fellow subjects the sole rule of his administration; and who, when out of office, independent of every partial connection, will steadily and uniformly adhere to the same honest plan."

It is on March 8th, 1749, that the *Diary* begins. Dodington had been laid up for nearly three months with an attack of the gout. He was now fifty-seven years of age. It opens with the news of the offer of the Prince of Wales to take Dodington under his protection, and thus to detach him from the King's service.

*March 8.* During my illness, several kind expressions from the Prince toward me were reported to me, and on the 8th of March His Royal Highness ordered the Earl of Middlesex to send Mr. Ralph with a message from His Royal Highness, to offer me the full return of his favour, and to put the principal direction of his affairs into my hands. I told Mr. Ralph that I desired the two following days to consider of it.

*March 11.* This day in the morning I wrote to Mr.

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Pelham, desiring him, as I was not able to go out, to wait upon the King, and in my name humbly to resign into his Majesty's hands my office of Treasurer of the Navy. The same day I gave Mr. Ralph my answer in writing to the Prince's gracious message.

The same morning, I received a very civil letter from Mr. Pelham, testifying his concern and surprise at my resolution, and desiring that he might see me before he delivered my message to the King.

*March 13.* This day early in the morning Mr. Pelham made me a long visit with much civility; he seemed to wish much that this affair might go no further. I told him that I saw the country in so dangerous a condition, and found myself so incapable to contribute to its relief and so unwelcome to attempt it, that I thought it misbecame me any longer to receive great emoluments from a country whose service I could not, and if I could, I should not be suffered to promote; so I begged him to excuse my Commission to the King, and then we parted.

He came to me again about eleven o'clock, to let me know that the King accepted my resignation very graciously.

Thus Dodington forsakes the Pelhams, and throws himself completely in with the party of the Prince of Wales. A very important interview soon follows.

*July 18.* This day I arrived at Kew about eleven o'clock. The Prince received me most kindly, and told me he desired me to come into his service upon any terms, and by any title I pleased; that he meant to put the principal direction of his affairs into my hands; and what he could not do for me in his present situation, must be made up to me in futurity. All this in a manner, so noble and frank, and with expressions so full of affection and regard, that I ought not to remember them, but as a debt and to perpetuate my gratitude.

After dinner he took me into a private room and of himself began to say that he thought I might as well be

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called Treasurer of the Chambers, as any other name; that the Earl of Scarborough, his Treasurer, might take it ill if I stood upon the establishment with higher appointments than he did; that His Royal Highness' destination was that I should have £2000 per annum. That he thought it best to put me upon the establishment at the highest salary only, and that he would pay me the rest himself. I humbly desired that I might stand upon the establishment without any salary, and that I would take what he now designed for me, when he should be King, but nothing before. He said that it became me to make him that offer, but it did not become him to accept it, consistent with his reputation, and therefore, it must be in present. He then immediately added that we must settle what was to happen in reversion, and said that he thought a Peerage, with the management of the House of Lords, and the seals of the Secretary of State, for the Southern Province, would be a proper station for me if I approved of it.

Perceiving me to be under much confusion at this unexpected offer, and at a loss how to express myself; he stopped me, and then said, "I now promise you on the word and honour of a Prince that as soon as I come to the Crown I will give you a Peerage and the seals of the Southern Province." Upon my endeavouring to thank him he repeated the same words, and added, putting back his chair, "and I give you leave to kiss my hand upon it, now, by way of acceptance," which I did accordingly.

This was certainly a good start, so far as prospects of his future were concerned, for the member's new career. Nothing of special importance is entered for some weeks.

*November 12.* I dined at Carleton House. The company, only the Prince, the Earl of Egmont, and Dr. Lee. Our business, the immediate steps to be taken upon the demise of the King, more particularly with relation to the Civil List. His Royal Highness said he had three methods

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proposed to him : the first was to let the present Ministers settle it, and then part with them and the Parliament. The second was, to dismiss four or five of the principals, but to vote the civil list before the Parliament was dissolved. The third (which he was pleased to say, he thought was my opinion) was to dismiss the Parliament immediately, to turn all those out he did not design to continue, and to throw himself upon the country for a new Parliament, and a provision for himself and family, which he desired should be only a clear annuity of £800,000, giving back the duties to the public, with whatever surplus might attend it.

The three suggestions were then fully discussed, and one can imagine Dodington's pride when he writes the next item in his Diary.

We were all, at last, of opinion that the third proposition was the greatest, most popular, and the best. His Royal Highness came heartily into it, gave us his hand, and made us take hands with each other to stand by, and support it. I undertook to find £200,000 or £300,000 to go on with, till a new Parliament could grant the civil list.

The Prince of Wales was a clever man. He could, and did, dispense his promises freely. There was no end to what Dodington was to have. But in the meanwhile the Prince needed money. It was a way he had. So Dodington's full pocket was to be utilised. He might have known why he had been chosen. He was known to be wealthy ; he was known to be inordinately ambitious. So the Prince was willing to promise him the future gratification of his ambitions, upon Dodington's immediate replenishing of the exchequer. In the Prince's household there was considerable jealousy of his new

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Treasurer. Dodington complained about this. The matter was glossed over, but the feeling of irritation remained. The story is too long for repetition here.

*July 2, 1750.* Dined with Lord Talbot, who informed me of the many lies which were told of me to the Prince, and the unalterable inveteracy of the family against me. God forgive them—I have not deserved it of them.

*September 11.* Sir Francis Dashwood told me at Wycombe what he had learned of Mr. Boone, viz. that my adversaries were satisfied that my design, when I came into the family, was to turn them all out, even to the women: that the Prince told Boone that I forced myself into his service, and that he could not help taking me, etc. That Lord Egmont said he knew that the Prince never advised with, or communicated anything to me; that Lord Egmont defrayed the Prince's expenses at Bath, and so on.

*September 16.* Messrs. Furnese and Ralph came to me. We had much conversation. We agreed that the Prince should, as soon as possible, be brought to some *éclaircissement*, and be informed, with proof, of the lies that had been told of me.

*November 4.* The King landed about twelve o'clock at Harwich, and came to St. James' between ten and eleven.

*November 18.* Mr. Tucker and I met Mr. Pelham at Mr. Scrope's by appointment: we settled the Weymouth re-election, according to the agreement made, on obtaining the new Charter.

*January 7, 1751.* Supped at Lady Middlesex's. It being Twelfth Night (Monday) she staked 75 guineas and I 125 with the Prince, who sent us word that we had lost eight guineas between us. Spent the week at Kew, where we had plays every day.

*January 20, 1751.* Went in private coaches with their Royal Highnesses, Ladies Middlesex and Howe, Lord Inchiquin, and Sir Thomas Bootle, to Mr. Glasse's, where we sent for a conjuror.

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*February 11.* Mr. Oswald, with other friends, was with me, who treated me in the most affectionate and friendly manner: told me all his views, and the offers that had been made to him, and concluded by saying that he wished to act always with me, and that he would accept of the Prince's service if he might come into it as my friend, and by and through my hands, but that he would not come in by any other hands or canal.

*February 12.* Went to wait on His Royal Highness at Kew, proposed to him the securing of Mr. Oswald by my weight with him; the Prince hesitated a little, as having made a trial some time ago by another hand, without success. At last he allowed the importance of the acquisition, and ordered me to sound Mr. Oswald's disposition towards it—His Royal Highness ordered me to dine and sleep there.

*February 13.* Mr. Oswald dined with me, and agreed to come to Hammersmith next morning, to settle what report I should make to the Prince.

*February 15.* Mr. Oswald came this morning and was pleased to put himself entirely into my hands, and to rely upon my friendship.

*February 16.* Dr. Lee came to me. I talked over to him, at large, the points of the Spanish treaty—Mr. Lascelles' privy seal—the ordnance contract—and the expedition. He seemed to approve of them, and I gave him several papers to look over at home. He told me very frankly that whatever I proposed he would cheerfully support with all his power in the debate; but as he was enjoined secrecy, he could not be the mover or seconder, because that would look like breaking short with Lord Egmont, and with others he had acted with.

*February 23.* Had a conference with His Royal Highness, and I began with telling him that on Monday Mr. Oswald was with me, to acquaint me that he had received positive offers from Court; he was surprised, and asked me what they were: I told him that though I owed my first duty to him, I ought not to conceal anything from him that related to his service; yet that there were also

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other duties that I held sacred, and if I should discover the secret of a friend to him, I hoped His Royal Highness would be pleased to promise me that it should go no further. He promised me, and I then told him that Mr. Oswald had been offered to be made Comptroller of the Navy, with a promise that he should have the assistance of all Mr. Pelham's power to reform the abuses of it, and full liberty to follow his own opinion in Parliament, and that he came to ask my advice upon it. The Prince, concluding he would accept of the place, said he was glad he should find so honest a man in business. I told him that from the many reasons I had given him, he declared to me that as he saw no reformation could be thoroughly and effectually brought about but by the concurrence of the Crown, which was not to be hoped for in our present situation, he had much rather attach himself to his Royal Highness, from whom only he could hope for that concurrence; but as he was no Courtier and had no connections of that kind, he must be contented to do his best in the station that was offered to him. That I bade him seriously consider whether, in case I would venture to sound his Royal Highness' disposition towards him, he would empower me to say that he would refuse all offers of the Court, if the Prince was willing to admit him into his service.—That he told me, I positively might; upon which I promised to undertake it. After a good deal of talk, the Prince thanked me, and ordered me to send Mr. Oswald to him at Leicester House between seven and eight o'clock on Monday next.

The above incident sheds a lurid light upon the political methods of those days. The plotting, the caballing, the betraying of secrets under promise of secrecy, the efforts to detach men from their allegiance, to capture them for ulterior ends, are intensely sad. Dodington, as his Diary shows, was *au fait* in all this. He loved to pull the strings which moved other men. He seemed even to prefer



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a secret and dark method to an open, straightforward, and honourable one. He was playing now for a great game. He was using every power he knew to ingratiate himself deeply and irrevocably with the Prince, who, as he firmly believed, would very speedily be king.

*February 25.* Mr. Oswald dined with me. He told me he was much embarrassed at what had passed since he saw me; of which he gave me the following account: viz.; Sunday the 17th Sir Henry Ereskine was introduced to the Prince for the first time; on Monday the 18th Mr. Oswald was with me to settle the report I was to make to the Prince; on Tuesday the 19th Sir Henry asked him in the house, Have you received any message from the Prince? What do you mean? he returned. Has the Earl of Egmont delivered you no message? I don't know the Earl of Egmont. He will then, replied Sir Henry, for I was introduced to the Prince last Sunday, and he asked me if I knew you. I said yes, intimately; he then asked how you were disposed towards him; I replied that I thought you had the highest regard for him. His Royal Highness then said, I must send to him by Dr. Lee or Lord Egmont, for what comes from them is the same as if it came from me. This seemed strange to us, but I think the drift is evident.

*February 26.* Went to the Earl of Shaftesbury's. Much talk with him about separating the Tories from the Jacobites, on the quarrel between them about the late University election, which was to be done by bringing them to a declaration of few heads, which, he said, he had made use of, and hoped he should succeed.

*February 28.* Mr. Oswald came to me from the Prince, whom he found at Carleton House. He was received very graciously, and the Prince talked to him on many subjects and of many persons, *but never mentioned my name.* They agreed that Mr. Oswald was to have the Green Cloth, and to kiss hands on Lady-day.

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Dodington was getting alarmed as to the permanence and power of his influence over the Prince. The hosts of enemies about his path were undermining him on every side. Nevertheless his command of money, and his numerous supporters, should have sufficed to pull him through his difficulties. It seems evident that he never quite succeeded in inspiring the Prince with the belief that he was an absolutely sincere and trustworthy servant to him.

*March 1.* Went to the House. Mr. Townshend advised with me about General Anstruther's affair. I begged him to be very sure of his proofs before he began a charge in Parliament. He desired leave to come to me to-morrow and to shew me his papers, which I agreed to, but desired him to consult with wiser persons than me.

*March 2.* Mr. Townshend came, and I fairly shewed him that calling for the reports in council would lead him to embarrass the Ministry, who, in this case of Anstruther, had delayed justice : that I should be glad it should come forward, but not from him, apprising him where his motion would end, since he asked my advice as a friend, and so on. He thanked me much, and it being late he desired to come again to-morrow morning.

*March 3.* Went to Leicester House, but just as I was going Mr. Townshend came, and to my infinite surprise told me that he had been with the Earl of Egmont, who had given him a question which comprehended the civil and military behaviour of General Anstruther, which he would read to me. He did so, and asked my opinion. I was astonished at his ignorance, and said, I had nothing to object to it.

*March 4.* Motion by Mr. Townshend seconded by Colonel Haldane, for copies of all courts martial held by Anstruther while he commanded in Minorca ; and of all complaints against him in council, and the proceedings thereupon. Agreed, without division, to drop the courts

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martial till some particular facts were alleged, but to suffer the council papers to come.

*March 6.* Went to Leicester House, where the Prince told me he had caught cold the day before at Kew, and had been blooded.

*March 8.* The Prince not recovered. Our passing the next week at Kew put off.

*March 10.* At Leicester House. The Prince was better, and saw company.

*March 13.* At Leicester House. The Prince did not appear, having a return of a pain in his side.

*March 14.* At Leicester House. The Prince asleep : twice blooded, and with a blister on his back, as also on both legs that night.

*March 15.* The Prince considerably improved, and was out of all danger.

*March 16.* The Prince without pain or fever.

*March 17.* Went twice to Leicester House. The Prince had a bad night, till one this morning, then was better, and continued so.

*March 18.* The Prince better, and sat up half an hour.

*March 20.* Went to Leicester House ; from thence to the House of Commons, and then to Hammersmith. I was told at Leicester House, at three o'clock, that the Prince was much better, and had slept eight hours in the night before, while, I suppose, the mortification was forming, for he died this evening a quarter before ten o'clock, as I found by a letter from Mr. Breton at six o'clock the following morning.

Thus, in one moment, were all Dodington's ambitious hopes, schemes, and prospects dashed to the ground. For whatever his rivals in the Prince's favour might have done, or might do, he was still a great force to be reckoned with, and he had wound his cords around the future King—as he was then deemed to be—so skilfully that his own position was

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assured. Dodington had been promised a Peerage ; he had been promised high office. *Some* splendid reward he was certain to have had, and he would probably have been in the entourage of the new sovereign. All now was lost. It was bitter ; it was disappointing ; it was disconcerting. What was Dodington to do now ? His Diary reveals his distress of mind.

When this unfortunate event happened I had set on foot, by the means of the Earl of Shaftesbury, a project for an union between the independent Whigs and Tories, by a writing renouncing all tincture of Jacobitism, and affirming short, but constitutional and revolutionary principles. I had given his lordship the paper : his good heart and understanding made him indefatigable, and so far successful, that there were good grounds to hope for an happy issue. These parties, so united, were to lay this paper, containing these principles, before the Prince ; *offering to appear as his Party*, now ; and upon those principles to undertake the administration, when he was King, in the subordination and rank among themselves, that he should please to appoint. Father of Mercy ! Thy hand, that wounds, alone can save !

There was rushing to and fro ; there were signals of distress. People came to Dodington to ask him what was to be done, "under this fatal change of situation." Dodington, still assuming the statesman (how well he could do it !), said that it appeared to him that if the Pelham party did not drive out the Bedford interest, they must be driven out by that, though now the weakest party ; but that the Bedford party would become the strongest, having the King's favourite and now only son at their head, and at the head of the army : that he would by their interest

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and by the military interest force the regency, and then, where were the Pelhams? This necessity, Dodington urged, enforced the necessity of the projected union; that being collected and publicly purged from Jacobitism they became a respectable body: that if they were applied to for assistance they might then give it upon such conditions, and for such share of power as they might think safe and honourable for themselves and their country.

And if, what was most to be dreaded, they were *not* applied to, and the Court should take either a dangerous turn, or should continue in the same consuming way as at present, that they would be ready to do what it was their duty to do—oppose to the utmost and declare that they mean to wrest the administration out of those hands, to take it into their own, and apply it to better purposes. Dodington's friends went away, "much satisfied and determined to act accordingly." The member for Bridgwater was beginning to recover a little from his grief. His convalescence was assuming shape. He was now able to do a little party wire-pulling.

*March 22.* I went to Leicester House. The Princess afflicted, but well. Went to council, at night, which was very full. The common prayer altered, but Prince George left, as he now stands. Ordered a Committee to settle the ceremonies of the funeral.

*March 24.* Went to the Duke of Dorset's—much talk. He thinks of the state of the nation and of the Pelhams, just as we do; as also of the danger from the Duke of Cumberland. At the Speaker's: he also in the same way of thinking with us.

*March 27.* To council. Orders to the Lord Steward and Chamberlain to issue warrant for black cloth, wax

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lights, etc., for the rooms at Westminster, where the body is to be laid.

*April 10.* Went to Mr. Oswald's—from thence to the Earl of Westmoreland, with whom, and Earl Stanhope, I had a long conversation. I left them, persuaded of the necessity of forming a party united by constitutional principles, which should be reduced into writing and signed by all the party.

*April 11.* I had much talk with Mr. Oswald on the state of affairs, and I told him that I thought I owed it to our friendship to acquaint him that if this great plan could be effected, I must take my share in it. He approved the greatness and honesty of the design, and at the same time told me that Mr. Pelham had renewed his offers since the Prince's death, to which he had returned a very general, cool answer: he said that he hoped, from the renewing that offer, to find that Mr. Pelham would shew resolution enough to enter into engagements with some more of us.

*April 13.* Lord Limerick consulted with me about walking at the funeral. By the Earl Marshall's orders neither he, as an Irish Peer, nor I, as a Privy Councillor, could walk. He expressed a strong resolution to pay his last duty to his Royal friend, if practicable. I beg'd him to stay till I could get the ceremonial; he did, and we then found, in a note, that we might walk.

At seven o'clock I went, according to the order, to the House of Lords. The many slights that the poor remains of a much-loved master and friend had met with, and who was now preparing the last trouble he could give his enemies, sunk me so low that for the first hour I was incapable of making any observation.

The procession began, and (except the Lords appointed to hold the pall and attend the chief mourner, and those of his own domestics) when the attendants were called in their ranks, there was not one English Lord, not one Bishop, and only one Irish Lord (Limerick), two sons of Dukes, one Baron's son, and two Privy Councillors (Sir John Rushout and myself) to make a show of duty to a

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Prince so great in rank and expectation. We went in at the S.E. door, and turned short into Henry VII's chapel. The service was performed without either anthem or organ. *Quem semper acerbum—semper honoratum.*

Thus ended the chance of George Bubb Dodington's greatest ambition, and for which he had staked well-nigh everything. Money, friends, personal likes and aims—all these had gone down before his absorbing desire to stand well with the future King, and to ingratiate himself into his affections and confidence. It was a bold, a magnificent venture. He played for high stakes ; he would—had his will been gratified, as it might have been if the Prince had come to the throne—have arranged Cabinets and given away offices and dispensed favours, even as he listed. But the unknown Force came in, and spoiled it all. The hand of Death was reckless even of Dodington's schemes.

*Post equitem sedet atra cura.* The member for Bridgwater had had a check ; he was sobered somewhat in his plans for attaining greatness. But, eleven more years of life yet remained to him ; what could he do now ? He must be alert ; he must lose no time. Within forty-eight hours of his master's funeral he was hard at work again, weaving anew the web of his somewhat delayed and shattered fortunes.

## CHAPTER VI

### GEORGE BUBB DODINGTON.—II

ON the 15th of April, 1751, Dodington had an interview with Lord Shaftesbury about the project of union (i.e., between the independent Whigs and Tories), and the latter was able to report that the outlook was exceedingly hopeful. By the 23rd, however, events had changed. On that day he dined at Sir Francis Dashwood's, and learned from Lord Talbot that no probability of the union was likely. "The terms they propose to sign," Dodington writes, "are of a sort that imply an exclusion of coming into office. Now, as no good can be done to this country but by good men coming into office, it is all over, and I give up all thoughts of ever being any further useful to mankind." On May the 11th he announced to his friend Ralph his resolution of no more meddling with public affairs till some party, *worth appearing with*, should unite in the service of the country. However, he consoled himself, *more suo*, by cultivating great men, and trying to hang on to them. A quaint little note in his book records how he was "to wait on the Duke of Newcastle, to thank him for getting me permission to drive through St. James' Park, while the King is at Kensington. We

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parted very civilly." He next "went to Kensington, and kissed the young Prince of Wales' hand, but did not see the King."

The endless catena of schemes into which Dodington now entered are too complicated and too numerous to follow. He was careful to keep on friendly terms with the Princess of Wales, with whom he joined in belittling the Pelhams, who now, of course, were in power. But he saw that his chance lay—and so far as he could see, lay only—through the Pelhams, and so he proceeded, without any beating about the bush, to lay vigorous siege to them. Dodington was never oppressed by sensitiveness. He was ever ready, if need should come, to embrace the powerful political leader whom he might have bitterly denounced and attacked the very day before. On February 6th, 1752, he heard through the Solicitor-General that the Pelhams had no indisposition to live well with Dodington, but, on the contrary, they were rather disposed to do so. At this, Dodington suddenly changed his course. He *must* ingratiate himself with the Pelhams. So he decided to fling himself, if they would have him, into their scale. His diary well shews the progress of events.

*February 10, 1752.* Mr. Ellis was with me. I told him that I thought my behaviour, both public and private, even in opposition, never could have given just cause for offence to the Pelhams, or could have shown any indisposition to live personally well with them: that as I was now entirely free from engagements I was sincerely desirous of Mr. Pelham's favour and friendship, if he would accept of my friendship and attachment; if then, he would accept of my services, he might, *under proper conditions*, command my interest, and in that case nobody

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would be more welcome to me at Weymouth than he, Mr. Ellis. That this was in Mr. Pelham's breast, who best knew his own disposition, but that mine was entirely inclined to be his friend and servant, *upon proper conditions*.

Dodington could control the Weymouth seat, which Ellis wanted. How skilfully the Bridgwater member dangled the bait ! But there were difficulties still. The Solicitor-General interviewed Dodington, and told him that, although the Pelhams were well enough disposed towards him, the King (George II) was much prejudiced against him. "So we parted," writes Dodington, "I taking it for a thing entirely broken off, but he saying that he did not yet see it in that light." However, a few weeks later the Solicitor-General, who was probably behind the scenes, advised a meeting between Pelham and Dodington, which accordingly took place.

Saw Mr. Pelham, by appointment, in Arlington Street. I began by telling him that the applications I had received from Mr. Ellis about his election at Weymouth, I considered as giving me a handle to wait upon him ; for I was come to offer him not only that, but all the service in my power, and that I was authorised to say the same from all my friends. He said, he should willingly embrace it, were it not for fear that he should not be able to fulfil what he wished to do, on his part.

I then asked him if there was any real inclination, in the Duke of Newcastle and him, to accept of us into their friendship and protection, if objections could be removed ; for I knew the different facility of removing them when there was a little good-will at the bottom, and when it was the work of importance, only—he would observe, that I did not arrogate importance, but if I had it, I would accept of nothing that was owing only to that—that at

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my time of life nothing would tempt me to come into any Court upon the foot of force and intrusion. I desired to live with him, and his, as their attached friend and servant.

Mr. Pelham said that there were real good wishes and good-will, and for nobody more. But, there were difficulties, and great ones, with the King, on account of my quitting his service for the Prince's.

This was certainly a home truth, and Dodington richly deserved it. But the astute man was equal to the occasion. He represented that he could be of some use to his Majesty's service, by his own weight and by the weight of his friends, particularly in choosing several members. This might remove prejudices. He hinted again at the Weymouth bait.

The long conversation between Pelham and Dodington is one of intense interest, since it reveals so thoroughly the political methods of those days. Pelham told Dodington about the King's indignation against him. "Here is a fine end of civilities," the King had said to Pelham. "Here is Dodington; you made me give him, the other day, a great employment, (Treasurer of the Navy, in 1749) and now he has thrown it at your head and is gone over to my son." Pelham then opened out his own plans to Dodington a little more openly. The bottom of all his politics, and his brother's too, was to choose a new Parliament that should be all of a piece; such a one as might serve the King if he lived, and be steady to put the new King in the right way if the old one died. He meant, a thorough Whig Parliament. Dodington concurred, *con amore*. He thought that the offer he now made to Pelham, from himself and his friends, might contribute to

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facilitate that end. "That is why," said Pelham, "I have told you about it."

Mr. Pelham renewed the assurances, at the end of this notable conversation, of his sincere wishes and endeavours in a very decent manner, and added that he was restrained from saying what he wished out of the regard he owed to Dodington. He would not say anything he was not sure to perform, and concluded by inviting himself, "in a most gentleman-like and obliging manner," to Dodington's house at Hammersmith.

*September 28, 1752.* Went to Mr. Pelham's. He gave me an account of Earl Poulett's correspondence with him about the vacancy at Bridgewater. I mentioned that I had written to his Lordship, to make it a means of reconciling the family. He seemed much indisposed towards Mr. Vere. There was company, and so we could not talk fully.

Vere Poulett had been elected member for Bridgewater, with Dodington, in 1741, and Peregrine Poulett succeeded him in the seat in 1747. The latter had died. Dodington promptly went to see Mr. Pelham, on October 4th. Our member looked upon Bridgewater as his own private preserve, and it was pleasant to show Pelham his power by discussing his Bridgewater interests with the great man.

*October 11, 1752.* I received an account from Bridgewater that, at the Mayor's feast, Mr. Balch, who was present, was declared candidate to succeed Mr. Poulett. I sent an abstract of the letter, with one of my own, to Mr. Pelham.

*October 13.* Saw Mr. Pelham, and spoke to him about this sudden event at Bridgewater. He agreed that it was wholly Earl Poulett's fault in not determining and recom-

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mending somebody sooner. He seemed to be well enough satisfied, from the character I had given him of Mr. Balch.

The King was still obdurate as regards Dodington, but this did not hinder the latter from pressing his suit with Pelham.

*March 16, 1753.* Mr. Pelham, Mr. Vane, Mr. Furnese and I dined together, by appointment, at Mr. Vane's. The offer of our thorough attachment, in return for Mr. Pelham's thorough friendship and protection in bringing us into court, was renewed, and my views of meaning to support their power, and not sharing it as a Minister, was explained. Mr. Pelham, in a very frank and honourable manner, declared his real desire and inclination to accept our friendship, and return his own; that, if his friendship was sufficient to effect the whole, he would with pleasure engage for the whole: but, that he could not answer for the King, whose prejudices were very strong against me, chiefly for my having quitted his service for his son's; but that everything in his power he (Pelham) would do to remove them, to make way for a measure so truly agreeable to him.

Dodington now determined to press matters home with Pelham. It was time, he thought, to clench affairs. In the very same interview he showed his entire hand to the great Minister.

All I desired him (Pelham) to say to the King was, that though it was never in my intention to offend his Majesty, it was sufficient that he was displeased for me to think myself to blame, and that to induce him to forgive me I humbly offered him my services and all the interest I had in the House, and out of it, for the rest of my life. I added that I thought this submission, and this offer of five members at least, should be sufficient to wipe away impositions, even if I had been a declared Jacobite.

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All I wished of the King was, to make me over to Pelham, to let him dispose of me as he thought fit, and suffer him to receive my friendship, attachment and services, that I desired by no means to encroach upon his Majesty's time, or thoughts, or behaviour, provided he would give him (Pelham) leave to employ me for his Majesty's service in the way that was most agreeable to him.

Upon the whole Mr. Pelham behaved in so open and noble a manner as to choose to make it plain that I should rather see that he wanted power, than have any doubt of his sincerity, if it did not succeed; and that the doubt of his strength and power alone, hindered him from promising positively to effect it; and therefore, if I judge this right, I am obliged to him, and am determined to be his friend, whether it succeeds or not.

*August 11, 1753.* I was at Bridgewater, and, with Mr. Balch, canvassed near half the town. The people did not choose to speak out, though very few declared they were engaged to Lord Egmont.

Dodington's next note refers to his constituency. He considers the electors there, it is evident, merely as pawns to be moved in the great political game. His great fear is, clearly, as to the chances of his rival, Lord Egmont, in the next year's election. One wonders what this last visit to the town cost him. How many sneakers of punch; how many barrels of October? How much in coin of the realm? For he could be—he was—lavish in his expenditure when he had a pet object in view. Now he had two objects. First, to inflict a crushing defeat upon Egmont; secondly, to clench his political bargain with Pelham, to whom he had promised five seats at least.

*August 18, 1753.* We returned home to Eastbury. The excessive badness of the roads and weather, with the



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nature of the business, made it much the most disagreeable journey, and the most fatiguing week I ever passed. All this trouble, vexation, and expence, as well as that to come, flows from a set of low, worthless fellows, who finding they shall not be bribed without an opposition, have prevailed on Lord Egmont to lend his name, to whom they will give one vote, that they may be able to sell the other. And notwithstanding, as things now appear, his Lordship has no chance of making his election. This he does not see, nor that the Tories (though partly for other reasons) make his greatest strength; so that he is setting up an interest, which, if it should succeed, he could never sit in quiet in that place. But though I think he has no chance at present, yet the uneasiness and expence will be the same to me, as if he was sure of success.

*October 9, 1753.* I went early to Mr. Pelham, and talked with him about Bridgewater: he gave me the strongest assurance of his assistance, and promised to write immediately to Philip Baker,<sup>1</sup> to convince everybody of his friendship for me; and that the Custom-house officers should be properly taken care of. I am convinced he is sincere.

*October 22, 1753.* I was with Mr. Pelham again, who has done all that can be expected hitherto, and promises to continue all his endeavours to support my election at Bridgewater against Lord Egmont's opposition. In this affair he has acted, and, I am convinced, he will act the part of a real friend. But I do not find that he has made any progress in the great point of smoothing my way to the King.

Dodington was getting thoroughly uneasy, with some reason, about the prospects of retaining his seat for Bridgewater. He had now promised all sorts of things to Pelham. He had made out that he was a man who could control seats in Parliament, and

<sup>1</sup> Philip Baker had already been three times mayor, and was a personage of considerable importance in the town.

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could influence hosts of friends. His plan was to convince the great Minister of his weight. But Dodington's insincerity was beginning to find him out. Lord Egmont was a very powerful rival, and was by no means a man to be despised. Born in 1711, he was the eldest son of John Perceval, first Earl of Egmont. In 1731 he had been returned to the Irish House of Commons for a constituency in County Kerry, which he had represented continuously until his succession to a peerage in the kingdom of Ireland. Through Pelham's interest he had gained a seat at Weobley in 1747. Now he had set his heart upon gaining Bridgwater, and his great reputation in the English House of Commons, with his interests in Somerset, marked him out as one who possessed great local interests, as well as a high Parliamentary reputation. It was in the year 1750 that he set to work to build the famous Enmore Castle; an enterprise which had made him known throughout all the countryside. Dodington perceived the reality of the crisis, and proceeded to take precautions.

*November 7, 1753.* I saw Mr. Pelham; he told me that Lord Poulett went immediately out of town from waiting, and that he had had no conversation with him, but a broken one, while he was waiting to be called in by the King. His Lordship had told him he had seen his letter, and denied that he had ever said Mr. Pelham was for Lord Egmont, but that he (Lord Poulett) was for him, and would fairly own it. Mr. Pelham replied that it was not material, but that he (Lord Poulett) should have publicly declared at the Mayor's (i.e., the Mayor of Bridgwater's) feast, that he (Pelham) was indifferent between the three, when his lordship knew he had so explicitly

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declared himself in favour of me (i.e., Dodington) and his friend, was very singular.

Dodington professed the profoundest determination to try and retain his Bridgwater seat, come what might.

I added [writes Dodington] that when I did things, I never did them by halves ; I professed attachment to him, and that where I had any interest, I meant to exert it against those who opposed his (Pelham's) administration, that therefore I desired him humbly to assure his Majesty in my name that my election was not the object, for that I would undergo the same trouble and the same expence to keep out any body that differed with his ministers, as I would if my own seat was in question. Mr. Pelham promised me he would make the kindest use of my declarations.

The next entry is worth reading, if only for its absolute frankness. We can picture these two men, Dodington and the Duke of Newcastle, two absolutely unscrupulous politicians, discussing the situation. How was Bridgwater to be captured? One way was open—one way only—to the minds of these patriots. There must be unstinted bribery. The occasion, they felt, was a great one. They must rise to it. The money-bags must be opened wide, and the more scrupulous, who could not be tickled with ten-pound notes, must be more delicately approached with daintier fare.

*December 11, 1753.* I saw the Duke of Newcastle, and convinced him that my trouble and expence at Bridgwater was only to keep out a man who opposed those to whom I attached myself: that my own seat was not concerned in it: that the maintaining the interest there was to me nothing, having nobody to bequeath it to. I then told him

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that, in these matters, those who would take money, I would pay, and not bring him a bill : those, that would not take, he must pay, and I recommended my two parsons of Bridgwater and Weymouth, Burroughs and Franklin : he entered into it very cordially, and assured me that they should have the first Crown livings that should be vacant in their parts, if we would look and send him the first intelligence.

I then just touched upon what had passed between Mr. Pelham and me. He professed his knowledge and approbation of the whole. I said, I must think that so much offered and so little asked, in such hands as theirs, and at a time when boroughs were a commodity particularly marketable, could not fail of removing, at least, resentments, and of obtaining pardon, which language I was willing to hold to my own Sovereign, but to no other.

His Grace was very hearty, and cordial, and protested that everything should be done to show their true regard and friendship for me. He did seem to lay no great stress upon difficulties with the King. I concluded by telling him that I had no desires of being in favour with the King, or even well with him, or about him : that all I desired was that he and his brother might be able to say, that the King left me to them—that was all my price. He answered very cordially—to appearance.

On December 18th Dodington went to see the Princess of Wales, with whom he had a long conversation. She appears to have opened her difficulties very freely to him. Early in the New Year (1754) he was closeted with Lord Barnard (formerly Mr. Vane) who promised to do everything possible for him with the King, but “nobody dies to make room, and we cannot turn out.” Fox had asked Mr. Pelham for the first vacancy in the Treasury for Barrington, but had been refused. Dupplin was to

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have it, and Lord Northumberland was to have the first blue ribband.

Dodington was not backward in claiming performance of the promises made to him. Bridgwater occupied his mind greatly, and he must not neglect it.

*January 29, 1754.* Went to the Duke of Newcastle, and got the living of Broadworthy for Mr. Burroughs.

It does not appear who Mr. Burroughs was, save that he had a vote for Bridgwater. In the election sheet for 1754 there occurs the name of the Rev. Benjamin Burroughs, and he gave one vote to Dodington and one to Balch. No doubt this was the man. One is glad to know that he was not the Vicar of the Town, and one wonders what the people of Broadworthy thought of him when they got him. A disgraceful transaction, truly! *Arcades ambo*, the Duke and the parson! That, however, was the Duke of Newcastle's way. And it is to be feared that there were other parsons of the Burroughs calibre, too, in those venial and degenerate times.

On March 6th Henry Pelham, Head of the Ministry as First Commissioner of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, died suddenly, thus further complicating Dodington's plans. He was succeeded as Premier by his brother, Thomas Pelham, Duke of Newcastle, to whom, of course, Dodington quickly went, on March 21st, to secure himself. He promised to give the Duke "all the little interest he had" towards the electing of the new Parliament, and further reminded his Grace that he (Dodington) was pledged to do all he could to

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exclude Lord Egmont from Bridgwater. Again the Diary must be quoted. It reveals, indeed, many things.

*March 21, 1754.* I proceeded (with the Duke of Newcastle) to the article of Bridgwater, which I said was thus—Long after my mutual engagements with Mr. Pelham, when Lord Egmont made that unfriendly attempt, Mr. Pelham asked me, what would become of it? I said that it need not affect my election, though it might destroy the Whig interest there for ever: that the interest was very indifferent to me, as I did not expect to live to see another Parliament, and had neither succession, relation, nor friend, that I could or wished to leave it to: but I asked him if it was indifferent to him that Lord Egmont should come in there. He said, no, to be sure; and hinted, besides his public opposition, great distaste to him personally.

The Duke was very serious and dejected during the whole conversation, and threw in several warm expressions of approbation, and then said that he was loaded with too many things at once for one man to bear: that he had seen, and his brother had told him, how handsome my proceedings had been. He begged me to say, what his brother had engaged to do, and to tell him all that had passed. I said I could not talk about advantages to myself, that were to take their rise from my own assertion only, when there was nobody to contradict me. He pressed me still more strongly.

Dodington then, according to his own showing, gave the Duke a long and rambling account of his (Dodington's) noble intentions. Pelham, it was understood, was to bring Dodington into the service when he could, "in a proper manner," but no particular day, or particular office, was settled upon. The Duke proceeded to ask that as there would be many changes, and that as they were obliged to cut

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the cloth into as many pieces as they could, did Dodington think he could come in (i.e., to office under the Government) before the election? The Duke was surely, thought Dodington, coming to something definite at last.

I said, I did think I could. He replied, he knew I might be trusted, and would talk very freely to me. The Secretary's office was settled, and he had four positive engagements, which were to Lords Hillborough, Dupplin, Barrington, and to Mr. Nugent. (Then followed much conversation about vacant offices, the Duke eventually asking Dodington which post he would like.) I said, there is my old place, Treasurer of the Navy; that must be vacant: I should like that better than anything. But, I added, why should I enter into these things, I leave it wholly to your Grace.

The interview seems to have ended somewhat dramatically. The Duke apparently implied profuse promises to Dodington.

He took me in his arms, and kissed me twice, with strong assurances of affection and service. I told him, I would go to Mr. Ellis, and acquaint him with his nomination to Weymouth; he desired I would, and from him to tell him, that he agreed to his brother's nomination, but not to say anything by way of compliment.

N.B. When I came in, the Duke had a quire of paper before him, upon which, at the top, I saw my name. He took notes of all that passed: called in Roberts, shewed him the paper, and told him, he must write it fair, the notes in one column for his use; the other, blank, to take the King's pleasure.

*March 23, 1754.* The Duke of Newcastle resigned the Seals, and Sir Thomas Robinson received them, and the following day those gentlemen kissed the Princess's hand.

*March 27.* Dined at Lord Carrington's, and found that notwithstanding all the fine conversation of last Thursday, all the employments were given away.

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*March 31.* Lord Barnard kissed hands at Leicester House as Earl of Darlington, Mr. Charles Townshend for the Admiralty ; and the Lord Chancellor, as Earl of Hardwick.

*April 1.* Waited on the Princess, in the evening, by her order. Musick. Sir George Lyttelton as Cofferer, and Mr. George Grenville as Treasurer of the Navy, kissed the King's hand.

*April 2.* Went to the Cockpit. Short talk with the Solicitor (i.e., the Solicitor-General) who is extremely hurt, dejected and dissatisfied with the proceedings.

*April 3.* Arrived at Eastbury.

*April 11.* Dr. Sharpe and I set out from Eastbury at four o'clock in the morning, for Bridgewater, where, as I expected, I found things very disagreeably framed.

*April 12.* Lord Egmont came, with trumpets, noise, etc.

*April 13.* He and me walked the town ; we found nothing unexpected, as far as we went.

The crisis was now close at hand. For Dodington it must, indeed, have been a time of the most intense anxiety. He had boasted to Pelham, who had since died, and to the Duke of Newcastle, and to all his party, of his strong electoral interests, and only three weeks before he had stated that he was able to command six seats, including Bridgewater. He had pledged himself to keep Lord Egmont out, and this he desired to do quite as much from personal as from political reasons. Moreover his chances with the Government were all dependent upon what he could do for them ; his aim and his plans were to make himself indispensable. The man who cannot be done without is one who occupies a very strong position, and this rôle was the one which Dodington had played all along. Then, too, he had represented the town since 1722, for thirty-two years. That he had

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used his ample means freely in purchasing votes, is well known. He had made no secret of it. Boroughs, in his view, were marketable commodities. He had bought Bridgwater. He had, no doubt he thought, a right to keep it. His motto was "*Je paye.*" Egmont's attack upon his citadel irritated and piqued him. He must win this fight, cost what it might.

The next entry in his Diary is the most disgraceful one he ever wrote in it. Mr. Henry Penruddocke Wyndham, in his well-known preface, pillories it. "I cannot patiently forgive," he writes, "the violent declamation of his Lordship against *the low and venal wretches of Bridgwater*, as if a bribe, taken by a miserable voter, and possibly for the support of a numerous and indigent family, was more dishonourable than a place or pension enjoyed or coveted by the opulent, for the sole purposes either of accumulating riches, or of extending the pomp of pride and power."

*April 14, 15, and 16, 1754.* Spent in the infamous and disagreeable compliance with the low habits of venal wretches.

*April 17.* Came on the election, which I lost by the injustice of the Returning Office. The numbers were: for Lord Egmont one hundred and nineteen; for Mr. Balch one hundred and fourteen; for me one hundred and five. Of my good votes, fifteen were rejected; eight bad votes for Lord Egmont were received.

*April 18.* Left Bridgwater — for ever. Arrived at Eastbury in the evening.

*April 24.* Arrived at Hammersmith in the evening.

Dodington had now, one would have imagined, received his quietus, and in one sense he had. But

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although he had lost the election, he was still full of schemes. On April 26th he went to the Duke of Newcastle, who received him joyfully because the Weymouth election had gone right ; sympathetically because the Bridgwater one had gone wrong. Dodington, of course, was full of excuses and of reasons. The Mayor of Bridgwater had been against him ; Lord Poulett had acted openly against him, with all his might ; and so strongly did the electorate in the town feel that no encouragement was given to him by the Government, that five out of the Custom-House officers gave single votes for Lord Egmont. The election had cost him £2500. A little later on he declared he had spent £3400 over it. For a while he wearied the Duke of Newcastle and every one else about getting up a petition to unseat Lord Egmont ; then he endeavoured to get the recalcitrant Custom-House officers punished. But it was all to no purpose. Finally the Duke told Dodington bluntly that he had no mind that the Bridgwater petition should be proceeded with, and that the matter had better be let drop. Dodington, of course, at once agreed that it was no cause of his, and that he would do all he could, with Mr. Balch, to quiet the town. The town, by the way, was perfectly quiet and content. Dodington made one final suggestion to the Duke. He was keenly anxious to punish the Custom-House officers, who, obviously, as he considered, should have voted for him. Would the Duke agree not to punish the town for its evil deed, simply by insisting upon punishing the officers for the way in which they had voted. They should be dismissed. "A good thought," said the Duke, who went away and

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promptly dismissed the matter from his mind. Bridgwater was allowed to rest in peace, with the Earl of Egmont and Mr. Robert Balch as its members, vice the Right Honourable George Bubb Dodington, beaten by his colleague by nine votes, and by his detested rival, Lord Egmont, by fourteen. The five single votes given by the Custom-House officers, if they had been transferred from Egmont to Dodington, would have made Egmont and Balch equal. But even then, Dodington would still have lost his seat.

*July 18, 1754.* I went to the Duke of Newcastle's. After his Grace had talked indecisively about Bridgwater, of which I gave him the hearing, I desired to know positively what I was to expect: he replied, and told me that he had laid all my services before the King in the fullest manner, but it did not satisfy him; that his Majesty endeavoured to lessen my credit at Weymouth—that the Duke replied that he thought his Majesty himself had told him that the borough was put into my hands, at the renewal of the charter, on condition of his naming two members for that time only. The King could not deny it; but upon the whole, he would not receive me to any mark of his favour. I said, that as it was so, I received his Majesty's displeasure with that respect and resignation which became me towards my Sovereign: that after such offers received, and suffered to be carried into execution, at the expence of nearly £4000, I did not believe such a conclusion had ever happened: but I submitted, and must act as opportunely as accidents should direct. The Duke expressed much sorrow; protested the sincerity of his endeavours, and said, that what would not do one day might do another. I replied that I could not judge of that; but if he imagined that I would remain postulating among the common herd of suitors, and expose myself to suffer twenty unworthy preferences more, to get, perhaps, nothing at last, certainly nothing that I wanted,—it was

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impossible. I would as soon wear a livery, and ride behind a coach in the streets. I repeated these words again in the course of the conversation. We parted very civilly.

*October 10, 1755.* I went first to Lord Hallifax, and then to Newcastle House. I was much pressed to join his Grace, but I absolutely refused being for the Russian subsidy on any account.

*December 17, 1755.* I went, by desire, to Newcastle House. His Grace, with many assurances of confidential friendship, told me, that he had the King's permission to offer me the Treasury of the Navy, which I accepted.

*December 19, 1755.* I waited upon the Princess to acquaint her with what had passed—but her Royal Highness received me very coolly.

*December 22, 1755.* I kissed the King's hand as Treasurer of the Navy.

At last Dodington had schemed himself into office! He was now serving under Newcastle and Fox, and he had got a seat in Parliament from his pocket borough of Weymouth. In the next year, however, he lost his post when Mr. Pitt came into power under the Duke of Devonshire. "I declined," he writes in his Diary on March the 9th, 1757, "being Chancellor of the Exchequer"; but on the 6th of the following month "Mr. Fox and I were ordered from the King, by Lord Holdernessee, to come and kiss his hand as Paymaster of the Army, and Treasurer of the Navy." This did not last long. At that time the shuffling of the cards of the political pack was exceedingly frequent. When Pitt formed his great administration with Newcastle Dodington was given no office, neither did he obtain any during the King's life. But on October 25th, 1760, George the Second died suddenly. To Dodington this was doubtless an intense relief. George never trusted

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Dodington after the day when he relinquished service with the King in order to feather his nest with the Prince of Wales. In spite of the persuasions of many Ministers, and much cajoling from Dodington himself, George remained adamant.

During the year 1760 Lord Bute was becoming a more important person, and Dodington cultivated him diligently. Bridgwater again came into the counsels of the great. Dodington, towards the end of 1760, offered to secure Lord Egmont's election at Bridgwater if the King wished it! In December of that year he told Lord Bute that if only the King would keep Egmont out of the English House of Peers, he (Dodington) would make his return for Bridgwater an assured thing. Lord Bute remarked, "It is too much for you to give up family interest." Dodington replied, with exquisite irony yet with the calmest assurance, "Nothing is too much that is useful, where friendship is real and mutual."

In 1761, after many years of almost ceaseless struggle, plotting, and infinitely hard work, he attained at last the summit of his ambition. The Calendar of Home Office Papers for that year records how that George Dodington, of Dodington in the County of Somerset, Esquire, received the grant of dignity creating him Lord Melcombe, Baron of Melcombe Regis, in the County of Dorset. Dated 14th March, 1761. Thus ends his connection with Bridgwater. He enjoyed his honours but a short time, dying at his house at Hammersmith on the 28th of July, 1762. There is a brief note on him in the short chapter on The Bridgwater Poll Sheet for the Year 1754.

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Dodington did much, it is well known, to lower the tone of political morals even in that degenerate time. Men, and their votes, were in his estimation things to be bought and sold. His plotting so infected his nature that he, probably unconsciously, became an absolutely insincere man. Thus he never inspired any man's confidence, or, if for a moment he inspired it, he was unable to retain it. His wholesale bribery in Bridgwater helped to drag the place down, and to degrade whatever ideals it may have had. Possessed of many gifts, and endowed with abundant resources, he might have shaped a splendid course, and have died beloved of all men. But "the meridian of evil is for the most part left unvexed ; and when human creatures have chosen their road, they are left alone to follow it to the end."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE ELECTION SHEET OF 1754

AS has been already seen by the very outspoken remarks which were published by the Town Clerk of Bridgwater in the year 1741,<sup>1</sup> it was frequently the custom, after an election, to issue a poll-sheet showing how the electors had voted, and also to append to it certain criticisms upon the way in which the election had been conducted. So important a contest as that of 1754 was sure to arouse feelings, and it did. Dodington told the Duke of Newcastle that he (though the losing candidate) had been fairly chosen by the town, and that the Returning Officer would not have dared not to return him had he not been encouraged to do so by the servants of the Administration. "The Borough was lost," said Dodington in high dudgeon to the Duke, "and lost solely by a Lord of the Bedchamber and the Custom-House officers: you may retrieve it, or not, just as you please: leave it in Tory hands, or recover it."

The Duke had special reasons of his own for wishing that a petition to unseat Lord Egmont—which was being pushed forward with great energy in some directions—should not be proceeded with.

<sup>1</sup> See chapter II.

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Under the most stringent promises of secrecy, he told Dodington that he (the Duke) knew very well that if the King was informed that the town was resolved to petition, and there were the least grounds to throw out Lord Egmont, King George would certainly give orders that the petition should be pushed forward with the utmost vehemence. It was probably true, however, that Lord Egmont was seated pretty firmly as Member. Dodington was so excessively chagrined at his own defeat that he could not judge wisely. The Duke of Newcastle, a shrewd old Parliamentary hand, could. Thus it came to pass that the plan to petition was dropped. Yet there was no small fluttering in the Bridgwater dove-cot, and many and virulent were the insinuations that were current.

The Polling-sheet was headed thus : A List of the Electors, April the 17th, 1754. Candidates, The Right Hon. the Earl of Egmont ; The Right Hon. George Dodington ; and Robert Balch, Esquire.

This List is published in Justice and Honour, to the virtuous and glorious uncorrupted ELECTORS of this Borough, who made so noble a Stand at the late Election, against all the base attempts of men, not content to be corrupt and venal Themselves, but malignant enough to be the instruments of corrupting and deluding Others. A noble Stand indeed ! And what must add to their Honour, is, That in Support of so good and just a cause, they bore their own Expences, at their Weekly Clubs, from the Time their noble candidate declared for the Borough, to the Day of the Election. But as some malicious suggestions have been thrown out to asperse the



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characters of those honest Electors with the Imputation of Bribery, and thereby reduce them to an equal Degree of Infamy with the corrupted themselves, the Propagators of such Falshoods are publickly called upon and defied to produce a single Instance in Proof of such vile Insinuations.

N. This Letter denotes such as promised to vote for Lord Egmont, but voted against him.

PN. These Letters denote such as signed an Invitation to Lord Egmont, but basely deserted him.

### SINGLE VOTES FOR LORD EGMONT

Anderson, Robert Procter, Attorney at Law.

Axford, Richard, Ironmonger.

Axford, William, Deal merchant.

Baker, Benjamin, Butcher.

Baker, James, Butcher.

Baker, Joseph, Tallow Chandler.

Bawdon, George, Carrier.

Beak, George, at the Swan.

Bessom, Thomas, Taylor.

Biggs, Nicholas, at the White Horse.

Binford, William, Esqre, Alderman.

Boon, Thomas.

Bozee, Thomas, Butcher.

Brimble, Thomas, Joiner.

Bryant, James, Town Clerk & Capital Burgess.

Bryant, James, Sadler.

Bryant, Robert, a capital Burgess.

Bryant, Thomas, Sadler.

Bryant, Thomas, Butcher.

Callon, Solomon, at the King's Arms.

Cane, Isaac, Plumber & Glazier.

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Chappel, John, Peruke Maker.  
Chubb, James, Hatter.  
Chubb, Jonathan, Hatter.  
Coles, James, Attorney & capital Burgess.  
Coles, (Rev.) John, a capital Burgess.  
Cowling, Robert, Cooper.  
Crandon, John, Glover.  
Culverwell, William, at the King's Arms.  
  
Date, Richard, Upholder.  
Davis, Thomas, Malster.  
Davis, William, Bellman, at the Ring of Bells.  
Dingley, Edward, Hellier.  
Drew, John, Coal Merchant.  
Dudderidge, Wm., White-Smith and Ironmonger.  
Dussen, Thomas, at the Ship-a-ground.  
  
Etherton, Robert.  
  
Fisher, Benjamin, Malster and capital Burgess.  
Fletcher, John, Malster, at the Queen's Head.  
Floyd, Thomas, at the Flower-de-luce.  
  
Gardner, Christopher, Currier and Merchant.  
Gardner, James.  
Giles, Thomas, Surgeon and capital Burgess.  
Glass, George, Painter.  
Good, Benjamin, Surgeon and capital Burgess.  
Gould, Richard, Esq ; Mayor.  
Grabham, John, Shoemaker.  
  
Haddon, Thomas, Hellier.  
Haddon, Thomas, junr. Hellier.  
Hancock, William, Smith and Edge-Tool maker.  
Hardeman, John  
Haviland, John, Surgeon and Deal Merchant.  
Hayne, John Tuck.  
Higgins, James, at the Sun.

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Higgins, John, at the New Inn.

Holloway, William, Taylor.

Knight, (Rev.) James.

Laud, Gabriel, at the Dial.

Lea, (Rev.) Samuel.

Luffe, Matthew, Hosier.

Marchant, Richd, Merchant and capital Burgess.

Marchant, R<sup>d</sup>, junior, Halster and capital Burgess.

Martin, John, Shoemaker.

Martin, Thomas, Butcher.

Mills, Nicholas, Tallow-Chandler.

Mills, William, Butcher.

Mines, John, Glover.

Mitchell, John, Sadler.

Mitchell, William, Tallow Chandler.

Mitchell, William, junr., Tallow Chandler.

Moore, Robert, at the Rose and Crown.

Neale, Nathaniel, Shoemaker.

Ody, John, Carrier and Malster.

Parsons, Francis Crane, A Capital Burgess.

Pine, Thomas, at the White Hart.

Phelps, Sam, Mercer and Draper, a capital Burgess.

Phelps, Thomas, Malster, and Deal Merchant, a capital Burgess.

Pitcher, John, Stone-cutter.

Player, John, Sexton.

Podger, (Rev.) John.

Prior, James, Mercer, and Draper, a capital Burgess.

Reed, John, Carpenter and Wheelwright.

Rich, Charles, Plumber and Glazier.

Rodd, Edward, Smith and Ironmonger.

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

Saunders, William, at the Sadler's Arms.  
 Seaward, Henry, Schoolmaster.  
 Selway, William, Blacksmith.  
 Senechall, James, Brazier.  
 Smith, Sam, Tallow-Chandler, a capital Burgess.  
 Stambury, Henry, Officer of Excise.  
 Stephens, Samuel, at the Three Crowns.  
 Symes, Benjamin, Tea-Merchant.

Trott, John, Coal-merchant and Rope-maker.  
 Tucker, Samuel, Malster.  
 Tuckett, John, Shopkeeper, a capital Burgess.

Walker, Thomas, Bricklayer and Mason.  
 Walters, Hugh, Butcher.  
 Walters, John, Butcher.  
 Webber, David, Schoolmaster.  
 Wills, Thomas, at the Star.  
 Withy, Thomas, Mercer, Draper, and Malster.  
 Wollen, James, Mercer, Draper and Grocer.  
 Wollen, Thomas, Brazier, Bell-Founder, Etc.  
 Woodham, Thomas, Peruke-maker.

### DOUBLE VOTES FOR LORD EGMONT AND THE OTHER CANDIDATES

	E.	D.	B.
Ballam, John, Baker . . . . .	1	—	1
Bayley, Thos, Brazier, Bell-Founder, etc.	1	—	1
Beale, Benjamin, Merchant, a capital Burgess . . . . .	1	1	—
Beale, John, Malster . . . . .	1	1	—
Chubb, Jonathan, Wine & Deal Merchant	1	—	1
Deepup, William, at the Castle . . . . .	1	1	—
Escott, Richard, at the New Cheese House	1	—	1
Freeman, Thomas, Plumber & Glazier . . . . .	1	—	1
Humphreys, Thomas, Peruke-Maker . . . . .	1	—	1

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	E.	D.	B.
Lockyer, Joseph, at the Fighting Cocks .	I	—	I
Pine, James, Blacksmith . . . .	I	—	I
Pine, John, Malster . . . .	I	—	I
Shutt, Robert, at the Cock . . .	I	—	I
Symes, John, Apothecary . . . .	I	—	I
Wilkins, Henry, Joiner . . . .	I	—	I

N.B.—Ball, Joseph, Linnen-Draper, was neutral.

## VOTERS IN THE JOINT INTEREST OF MR. DODINGTON AND MR. BALCH

Atwell, John, Custom-House-Officer.

Baker, Philip, Esq ; Alderman.

Baker, Robert, Blockmaker, N.

Baker, Samuel, Gent.

Baker, William, Glover.

Banfield, Bartholomew, Farmer.

Bickham, George, Hellier, N.

Bicknell, Christopher, at the Green Dragon.

Bicknell, George, Farmer.

Biffen, Hugh, Pig-jobber.

Bond, Richard, Broker.

Boothby, Richard, Malster.

Bowles, Thomas, Sadler.

Brown, Richard, at the Coach and Horses, N.

Burroughs, (Rev.) Benjamin.

Chilcot, Richard, at the Old Cheese-House.

Codrington, Richard, Attorney.

Cole, John, Mercer and Draper.

Commens, Robert, Stockingmaker.

Cox, John, Coal-merchant, a capital Burgess, N.

Cox, Philip, Coal-merchant.

Davis, John, Butcher.

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Davis, John, Shoemaker.

Davis, William, Malster.

Denis, George, Schoolmaster, N.

Dicker, George, Cooper, P.N.

Dodrell, Isaac, Butcher.

Drake, John, Custom House Officer.

Escott, John, Bricklayer.

Escott, Richard, Grocer.

Evered, John, Attorney.

Freeman, William, Taylor.

Gander, John, Bargeman.

Gander, John, Junr., Barber.

Gill, John, Blacksmith.

Glover, Samuel, Apothecary and Shopkeeper.

Greenfield, Samuel, Ropemaker and Baker.

Harding, Edmond, Malster.

Harvey, John, Collector of the Customs.

Hayes, Isaac, Staymaker.

Hayes, Thomas, Staymaker.

Haysham, George, Silversmith.

Hewet, John, Butcher.

Hill, John, Apothecary.

Hill, John, Shopkeeper.

Hogg, James, at the Three Tons.

Hooper, Henry, Hellier.

Jackson, John, Taylor. N.

Jarman, Edward, Hatter. N.

Jerritt, William, Baker.

Kennaway, Robert, Mercer and Draper.

Kidgell, John, Farmer.

Laroche, Charles, Perukemaker.

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Laroche, William, Draper and Upholsterer.

Laver, Samuel, Hatter.

Leane, Alexander, Mercer and Draper.

Lewis, Thomas, at the Three Swans. P.N.

Lockyer, Thomas, Custom-House-Officer.

May, Henry, at the Globe.

Mills, Matthew, Postmaster & Tallow Chandler.

Mounsher, John, Baker.

Neale, William, Shoemaker.

Needs, Edward, Bricklayer.

Needs, Edward, junior, Bricklayer, at the Dog.

Newman, John, Baker. N.

Newton, William, Stonecutter. P.N.

Ogborn, Joseph, a Bankrupt.

Osborn, John, Taylor.

Osler, Thomas, Malster.

Perry, John, Baker, N.

Pine, William, Seaman.

Quarrell, Gilbert, Attorney.

Quarrell, Thomas, Malster, a capital Burgess.

Reed, Thomas, Carpenter. P.N.

Richards, John, Butcher.

Richards, William, Butcher.

Rood, Thomas, Butcher, N.

Rossiter, William, Mason.

Rossiter, William, junr. Mason. N.

Sealy, John, Attorney, and capital Burgess.

Street, Robert, Brazier, Bell-Founder Etc.

Sutton, John, Joiner. N.

Symes, John, Ropemaker.

Symes, Thomas, Joiner.

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Taylor, Anthony, Doctor.  
 Taylor, George, Baker.  
 Taylor, John, Ironmonger.  
 Taylor, Joseph, Malster.  
 Taylor, Thomas, Smith. N.  
 Taylor, Udal.  
 Taylor, William, Joiner.  
 Thomas, Evan, Anabaptist Teacher.  
 Thorne, Matthew, Tanner.  
 Thorne, Matthew, junr., Tanner.  
 Tilsley, Hugh, Brickmaker. N.  
 Towgood, Matthew, Dissenting Teacher.

Wall, Thomas, Coal-meter.  
 Watson, Robert, at the George.  
 Watts, James.  
 Webb, Job, Hatter. P.N.  
 Welling, George, Farmer, N.  
 Wills, Edward, Bricklayer.  
 Young, Thomas, Peruke-Maker.

N.B. Pimm, John, Wine Merchant, did not vote.

For Lord Egmont, single voters	.	.	104
double voters	.	.	15
		—	119
For Mr. Dodington, double voters	.	.	106
For Mr. Balch, double voters	.	.	115

Bristol: Printed by E. Farley, at Shakespear's-Head in Small Street."

There are a few discrepancies between Dodington's statements in his Diary and the above list. The latter, probably, is correct, and we need not trouble to analyse either Dodington's figures or his facts. From this time forth he disappears from Bridgwater

## THE ELECTION SHEET OF 1754

life. The list may be of interest<sup>1</sup> in indicating how many of the old families still survive in the town. Although a hundred and fifty years have passed away since it was issued, it seems to be full of familiar names as we read it through.

Lord Egmont retained his seat, and was returned for the Borough again in 1761. He was, there can be no doubt, a really able man. In the following year the Home Office Papers announce that John Perceval, Earl of Egmont in the Kingdom of Ireland, was henceforth John Lord Lovel and Holland, Baron Lovel and Holland, of Enmore, in the County of Somerset. He took his seat in the House of Lords on the 10th of May, 1762. In 1765 permission was granted to him to pass "through the gates of St. James and the Green Parks, and in and out of the Horse Guards in his coach." His career had been a singular one. Beginning life as a Member of the Irish Parliament, he then inherited an Irish Peerage. Next he entered the English House of Commons, and finally became an English Peer. He was father of the famous Spencer Perceval, the Premier, who was shot by Bellingham in the lobby of the House of Commons in 1812.

Concerning Dodington little remains to be said. He passed for a wit, and a man of taste, in his day. Verses were dedicated to him, and several literary men—including Fielding—rather flattered him. He was, indeed, inclined to adopt the part of the patron to rising genius. Occasionally he wrote verses, to the great delectation of his flatterers, and his wealth

<sup>1</sup> The list of voters is now given in full by the particular request of many Bridgwater people.

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

gave him a commanding position amongst literary men, who, then as now, were frequently poor. His house at Eastbury was gorgeously caparisoned, "full of tasteless splendour," as was said of it. He also possessed a town house in Pall Mall, and a villa at Hammersmith. His ability cannot be denied, and he was a really good classic. His opportunity was very great, and had he been less time-serving he might well have risen to high office in the State. His connection with Bridgwater was unfortunate in every way. It lowered ideals which were already low, and prostrated the electorate, or a part of it, to the condition of paid hirelings. In doing that, of course, his own degradation was saddest and worst of all.

# A LIST OF THE ELECTORS

Who polled at *BRIDGEWATER*, April the 17<sup>th</sup> 1754

Candidates  
The Right Hon. Earl of EGDMONT,  
The Right Hon. GEORGE DODINGTON,  
ROBERT BALCH, Esq.

This List is published in Justice and Honour to the virtuous and glorious uncorrupted ELECTORS of this Borough, who made so noble a Stand at the late Election, against all the base Attempts of Men, not content to be corrupt and vent themselves, but malicious enough to be the Instruments of corrupting and deluding Others. A noble Stand indeed! And what must add to their Honour, is, That in Support of so good and just a Cause, they have their own Expenses at their Weekly Clubs, from the Time their noble Candidate declared for the Borough, to the Day of the Election. But as some malicious Suggestors have been thrown out to asperse the Characters of these honest Electors with the Imputation of Bribery, and thereby reduce them to an equal Degree of Infamy with the *Corrupted* themselves, the Propagators of such Falshoods are patently called upon and defied to produce a single Instance in Proof of such vile Insinuations.

N. This Letter Annexed hath so provided to vote for Lord Egmont, has voted equally free.  
P.S. That Letter Annexed hath so signed an Invitation to Lord Egmont, has lately declared free.

High Court of the Bench	High Court of the Bench	High Court of the Bench	High Court of the Bench
1. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	2. The Right Hon. George Dodington	3. Robert Balch, Esq.	4. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont
5. The Right Hon. George Dodington	6. Robert Balch, Esq.	7. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	8. The Right Hon. George Dodington
9. Robert Balch, Esq.	10. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	11. The Right Hon. George Dodington	12. Robert Balch, Esq.
13. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	14. The Right Hon. George Dodington	15. Robert Balch, Esq.	16. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont
17. The Right Hon. George Dodington	18. Robert Balch, Esq.	19. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	20. The Right Hon. George Dodington
21. Robert Balch, Esq.	22. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	23. The Right Hon. George Dodington	24. Robert Balch, Esq.
25. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	26. The Right Hon. George Dodington	27. Robert Balch, Esq.	28. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont
29. The Right Hon. George Dodington	30. Robert Balch, Esq.	31. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	32. The Right Hon. George Dodington
33. Robert Balch, Esq.	34. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	35. The Right Hon. George Dodington	36. Robert Balch, Esq.
37. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	38. The Right Hon. George Dodington	39. Robert Balch, Esq.	40. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont
41. The Right Hon. George Dodington	42. Robert Balch, Esq.	43. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	44. The Right Hon. George Dodington
45. Robert Balch, Esq.	46. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	47. The Right Hon. George Dodington	48. Robert Balch, Esq.
49. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	50. The Right Hon. George Dodington	51. Robert Balch, Esq.	52. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont
53. The Right Hon. George Dodington	54. Robert Balch, Esq.	55. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	56. The Right Hon. George Dodington
57. Robert Balch, Esq.	58. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	59. The Right Hon. George Dodington	60. Robert Balch, Esq.
61. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	62. The Right Hon. George Dodington	63. Robert Balch, Esq.	64. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont
65. The Right Hon. George Dodington	66. Robert Balch, Esq.	67. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	68. The Right Hon. George Dodington
69. Robert Balch, Esq.	70. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	71. The Right Hon. George Dodington	72. Robert Balch, Esq.
73. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	74. The Right Hon. George Dodington	75. Robert Balch, Esq.	76. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont
77. The Right Hon. George Dodington	78. Robert Balch, Esq.	79. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	80. The Right Hon. George Dodington
81. Robert Balch, Esq.	82. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	83. The Right Hon. George Dodington	84. Robert Balch, Esq.
85. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	86. The Right Hon. George Dodington	87. Robert Balch, Esq.	88. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont
89. The Right Hon. George Dodington	90. Robert Balch, Esq.	91. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	92. The Right Hon. George Dodington
93. Robert Balch, Esq.	94. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	95. The Right Hon. George Dodington	96. Robert Balch, Esq.
97. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont	98. The Right Hon. George Dodington	99. Robert Balch, Esq.	100. The Right Hon. Earl of Egmont



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE REBUKE OF ROBERT BROWNING

**T**WENTY years ago Robert Browning, two years before his death, published his *Parleyings with certain People of importance in their day*. One of these parleyings is addressed to George Bubb Dodington, whose political career was so intimately connected with the people of Bridgwater. It is entirely beside the purpose of this slight chapter to deal with the writings of a great poet and prophet, or even to analyse the little poem itself. It must tell its own story, as it does perhaps with less obscurity than in many other of Browning's writings, to those who have ears to hear. It was one of the latest efforts of a man who, as Mr. Stopford Brooke truly says, stood "alone among his fellows in his unique and individual power, who has fastened himself into our hearts, added a new world to our perceptions, developed our lives and enlarged our interests." A protest may probably arise instantly within the reader's mind against Browning's lack of clearness in his writings. It is so; it cannot be denied. His style not only lends itself to obscurity, it gives itself up to it. The poet takes his pastime therein. His style, however, is a true expression of his thoughts. With him, contesting ideas contend, and chase each

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

other along his rugged lines. Half-a-dozen thoughts, expressed usually in parenthesis, are with him at the same moment, and he is content to leave none of them out. They are all contributory, and they all have their value. But they frequently overshadow the main point, and half conceal it. His canvas becomes too crowded.

All this is well enough, and his most devoted readers are entirely conscious that his method often mars the melody of his song. All that may pass. He has enriched human life immeasurably. He points men above. We are here to grow strong enough and brave enough and good enough to take our share in a further life beyond. "O fool, to claim the little cup of water earth's knowledge offers to thy thirst, or the beauty or love of earth, when the immeasurable waters of the Knowledge, Beauty, and Love of the Eternal Paradise are thine beyond the earth!"

Browning's *Parleyings* are not by any means to be reckoned as lying parallel with his best work. Their intellectual force is less evident; their poetic charm is diluted with some loss of imaginative power. Yet his poem addressed to George Bubb Dodington, dealing as it does with the ways of a man of the most earthly type of character, of a most selfish plan of life, and of almost no nobility of soul, spells out with bitter irony the failure of such a career as his.<sup>1</sup> His method, Browning says, was glaringly at fault.

<sup>1</sup> *Author's Note.*—I venture to commend the study of this little poem most earnestly to any student of the history and doings and people of Bridgwater. It is contained in a most accessible form in Volume VIII in the small eight-volume edition of Browning's Works. Volume VIII costs 2s. 6d. Published by Smith, Elder, & Co.

## THE REBUKE OF ROBERT BROWNING

“Ah, George Bubb Dodington Lord Melcombe, no, yours was the wrong way!”

The poet presents his subject in the form of a problem, which is this. How may the politician who intends to get on, best compass his end? He desires, it is assumed, fame, a comfortable career, wealth and position, and the applause and reverence of the public. Assuming that he may do anything he wishes in order to possess these things, how shall he essay the task?

Supposing that permissibly you planned  
How statesmanship—your trade—in outward show  
Might figure as inspired by simple zeal  
For serving country, king, and commonweal,

then, of course, it must be made evident that this self-denying servant of the state may also, as a duty to himself, provide for his own home-needs and wants. Public service of right demands its wage; the politician may permissibly strive for a comfortable hearth and home, even as birds build for themselves cosy nests. A politician's public zeal must not be allowed to mar his private welfare. His zeal, indeed, must be allowed to merit

a domicile where downy fluff  
Embeds the ease-deserving architect.

So long as the public, thus fooled, believe in the man's zeal for his country, they will not grudge him a luxurious home. This sham zeal must be kept up, for purposes of successful deception, in the public view.

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

Let us assume, says Browning to Dodington, that your aim was a right one.

Here trip you, that—your aim allowed as right—  
Your means thereto were wrong. Come, we, this night,  
Profess one purpose, hold one principle,  
Are at odds only as to—not the will  
But way of winning solace for ourselves.

Dodington's way, the poet suggests, was by attempting to deceive the public by continued assertion that he was sincerely aiming solely for their good, regardless of himself. But such falseness is useless. The crowd see through it, for they are equally shrewd.

Not so, George !  
Try simple falsehood on shrewd folk who forge  
Lies of superior fashion day by day  
And hour by hour ? With craftsmen versed as they  
What chance of competition when the tools  
Only a novice wields ? Are knaves such fools ?

No; man will not obey his equal; only his superior. Nor will he bow down to strength alone; "intelligence must move strength's self." And just as force has become replaced by wit and knowledge, so knowledge—such as Dodington could claim—is easily equalled elsewhere. That cannot, *per se*, capture the multitude.

men have got to know  
Such wit as what you boast is nowise held  
The wonder once it was, but, paralleled  
Too plentifully, counts not,—puts to shame  
Modest possessors like yourself who claim,  
By virtue of it merely, power and place  
—Which means the sweets of office.

## THE REBUKE OF ROBERT BROWNING

The mere pretence of disinterestedness, then, has failed. So also has the assumption of the possession of a greater and wider knowledge of things. That plea is worn out, save for the real genius, which Dodington was not. What then was the secret of this desired power over men? He comes now to the gist of his argument. Man can only be moved by a touch of that which is beyond Man.

Who would use  
Man for his pleasure needs must introduce  
The element that awes Man. Once for all  
His nature owns a Supernatural  
In fact as well as phrase—

What? Magic; Mystery? These are outworn in our day, yet formerly they served their purpose well. *Omne ignotum pro magnifico*. The wizard, even the quack, knew well what he was about. They pretended to appeal to something uncanny, something non-earthly, something from another realm, impalpable and elusive. Thus they succeeded in their time, and the method—though not the means—holds good still.

Folk fear to jeopardise their soul,  
Stumble at times, walk straight upon the whole—  
That's nature's simple instinct: what may be  
The portent here, the influence such as we  
Are strangers to?

Exact the thing I call  
Man's despot, just the Supernatural  
Which, George, was wholly out of—far beyond  
Your theory and practice.

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

Or the politician might have recourse to the old catch-phrases; "Hearth and Home, the Altar, love of England, hate of Rome"; such lying ideals have served men in their day. But these will hardly avail now; the crowd see through them, "and find the greed and selfishness at source."

There is another resource. Let the politician adopt a more perfect disguise. Its disguise lies in its denial of disguise;

truth that looks like lies,  
Frankness so sure to meet with unbelief?

Let him pretend to hold himself as it were in scorn; and them! Show plainly that he is not accountable to the ordinary rules of life. Something beyond these are his Master, his Inspiration. This plan used, you may freely, says Browning to him,

induce

The puppets now to dance, now stand stock-still,  
Now knock their heads together, at your will  
For will's sake only—while each plays his part  
Submissive: why? through terror at the heart:

The crowd is cowed; utterly in subjection. It can make nothing of such a man, who seems to be beyond the ken of mortals, and to have no fear of them. Nay, he has no fear of himself; can he be inspired?

Can it be—this bold man, whose hand we saw  
Openly pull the wires, obeys some law  
Quite above Man's—nay, God's? On face fall they.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Author's Note.*—Browning was exceedingly well read in Hebrew lore and tradition. I have always thought that in this passage he is

## THE REBUKE OF ROBERT BROWNING

Exactly, the mystery which clings to the actions of a brilliant schemer such as this, may be—has been—successful. The man who surrounds himself with awe is the man who wins. It is the plan of the false Messiahs and the false prophets and the Mahdis and brilliant rascals of every age. It has within it a suggested touch of the supernatural—that is enough. “On face fall they.”

Why, then, could not Dodington adopt this rôle? It was far beyond him, out of his sight. A man cannot even pretend to what he cannot apprehend. To feign implies to know what is feigned. Dodington's grossness was too earthly and too material for such high chicanery; he must use, as he did, clumsier tools. He gained his Peerage, but nothing of men's respect. He won half his ambition, but he utterly missed the other half. It was above, aloof from his reach; in a world apart.

This was the secret missed, again I say,  
Out of your power to grasp conception of,  
Much less employ to purpose. Hence the scoff  
That greets your very name : folk see but one  
Fool more, as well as knave, in Dodington.

Browning's warning is perfectly true to life. Dodington did not even impose upon the people in our borough whom he had bribed. They rejected him at last. To inspire them, even ever so feebly, was

referring to the incident mentioned in 1 Kings xviii., verses 38 and 39. There the Prophet, openly invoking the Divine Aid, convinces the people. They fell upon their faces. Elijah, of course, was a real Prophet. But what is real always finds its imitators. Dodington was unable even to imitate any touch with what is Divine. Thus he failed.

### BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

out of his power, and so he failed in all that wise men hold to be worth winning.

Thus did Robert Browning rebuke the ambitious Member of Parliament for Bridgwater. Posterity, beyond doubt, will confirm the verdict which he has given.

## CHAPTER IX

### COACHING DAYS

#### I

THERE was an old proverb in vogue in the eighteenth century which declared that England is—or rather, then was—"the paradise of women, the hell of horses, and the purgatory of servants." An explanation of this curious saying is given us by that quaint old writer, Mr. Francis Grose. "The liberty allowed to women in England," he writes, "the portion assigned by law to widows out of their husband's goods and chattels, and the politeness with which all the denominations of that sex are in general treated, join to establish the truth of this part of the proverb." Then he proceeds: "The furious manner in which people ride on the road, horse-racing, hunting, the cruelties of postillions, stage-coachmen and carmen, with the absurd mutilations practised on that noble and useful animal, all but too much prove the truth of this part of the adage. But, that this country is a purgatory of servants I deny; at least, if it ever was, it is not so at present; I fear they are rather the cause of bringing many a master to that legal purgatory a gaol." It is with the second clause of the proverb that this chapter is concerned. It indicates a period when

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

travelling on horseback or by coach was the chief means of getting from place to place. It implies, too, that the lot of horses was hard, as, beyond all doubt, it assuredly was.

Travelling in England, three hundred years ago, was no easy matter. Up to the beginning of Queen Anne's reign most of the traffic of the country was carried on by means of the system of pack-horses. It was usual for protection, for company, and for convenience, to travel in gangs of forty or fifty horses, proceeding in single line. The horses, well trained, usually kept to the same order, and each one knew his own place. The leader carried a bell attached to his head-gear. The tinkling served as a warning to such passengers as there might be on the road to keep out of the horses' way, in the dark, or at the turnings of a narrow lane. The horses carried loads of the most mixed description; wool, hops, and meal, baskets of poultry, fish, vegetables, fruit, eggs, meat, and every other kind of commodity. It required considerable skill to load the horses well, for the narrow and execrable roads, the hills and fords and sharp turnings, the ups and downs of the way, tested the stability of the most well-packed burden.

Coaches, of a kind, were in use on some of the great English roads as early as the days of Charles the First, and in Charles the Second's reign the tradesmen in and near London felt themselves so much aggrieved that they petitioned the King against them. It affected their trade, it was alleged, and it was a nuisance. They therefore implored the King and privy-council to put an end to the stage-coach plan. This was met by a counter-statement from

## COACHING DAYS

the stage-coach proprietors, demurring to the complaints made against them. After stating that they had, about thirty years previously, established stage-coaches, and since continued them at great expense and risk, they proceeded to say that the prejudice that would accrue to his Majesty's subjects in general would be evidently much greater, by the putting down of the said coaches, than the disadvantage that can be imagined to fall upon any person should the same be continued; though withal, "were it admitted that all the petitioners were damnified thereby," yet their interests all conjointly are not to be respected in comparison of the public, nor to be put in the balance with it.

As to the charge that the coaches had injured the profits and rents of inns, they think it must rather have arisen from other causes; but, even admitting the truth of the charge, it is added with much good sense that "that trade, as all others, being only intended for the benefit of the publike, their private profit is not to come in computation with it, for the people are not made to enrich inns or any other trades, but all trades for the benefit and service of the people, and all conjoynd together are but as a particular interest in comparison thereof."

The charge that the consumption of provisions for man and beast had been lowered, and the rents of lands brought down by means of stage-coaches, was met by a flat denial. As to horse-meat, each of the stage-coach horses ate three times as much as any saddle-horse that travels; and in their coaches there was not less, taking one time with another, than one horse for every passenger that travels upon the

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

roads ; and besides this, the number of saddle-horses had not diminished in consequence of the establishment of stage-coaches. With any diminished consumption of man's meat, the memorialists do not consider that they have anything to do. "It is either the laying aside the ancient way of hospitality and good housekeeping, or else the poverty of the country, and not the hackney-coaches (evidently describing stage-coaches by this term) that hinders the consumption thereof." The manner in which they meet the charge that the breed of horses had been deteriorated through the stage-coaches, is very curious. They contend the breed has rather improved ; "for that the stage-coaches kill more horses in one year than those who travel upon saddle-horses do in three ; and so occasions more vent for breed thereby, and more encourages it. And besides, few or no gentlemen keep a saddle-horse the less for the use that they make of stage-coaches, having the like need of them for travelling about their occasions in those parts of the country where the stage-coaches go not, that they had before."

In the remaining paragraphs the coach proprietors meet the charge that good horsemanship will be lost by the establishment of stage-coaches ; and deny that the revenue from the excise and post-office is diminished through them, remarking very justly, that the more the intercourse between the different parts of the country is facilitated, these branches of revenue must necessarily be benefited in the same proportion. They had been charged with "hindering the bread of watermen" ; but they reply that the stage-coaches which went upon the great roads, far from the

## COACHING DAYS

Thames, were not to blame for this, but rather the hackney-coaches in and about London.

It seems that the hackney-coach proprietors in London were parties in this petition against stage-coaches. "But the result of this attempt to put down an important public convenience was as unsuccessful as every similar attempt made by the few against the welfare of the many must ultimately prove, whatever temporary success it may obtain." The complaint "against stage-coaches in the reign of Charles II," says a writer of the days of King William IV, "might be matter of just wonder to us, but the clamour on every side about the cab and omnibus nuisance in the present day" (i.e. about 1833) "is so much in the same spirit, that our wonder at such short-sighted objections is not equal to the pain with which we perceive that in the public mind there remain dark and narrow crannies which the gradually increasing light of one hundred and fifty years has not yet been able to penetrate."

A very early Act, passed in the sixteenth century, was called for by the numerous robberies and murders which had been committed in the counties of Gloucester and Somerset, in the districts adjoining the Severn. It enacted that no boatman or ferryman should convey passengers between sunset and sunrise, and that those who kept ferries should give security that they would not at any other times convey passengers or goods save for such persons as were well known to them. A later Act recited that the highways were very noisome and tedious to travel in, and dangerous to all persons and carriages. It ordered that every parish should annually elect two surveyors

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

of the highways, to see that the parishioners, according to their ability, send their carts, horses, men, and tools, four days in every year for mending the roads. Many other Acts were also subsequently passed. In 1629 it was enacted that no common carrier, or other person whatsoever, should travel with any wain, cart, or carriage with more than two wheels, nor with above the weight of twenty hundred, nor draw any wain, cart, or carriage with above five horses at once. By Queen Anne's time a further measure was passed in order to prevent the soft roads of those days from being cut up in deep ruts. Waggoners were to use a pole or shafts with their wheel-horses, and they must not use more than six horses or oxen to one waggon at a time, except up hill. One of the later editions of Ogilby's *Itinerarium Angliæ* describes the road from London to Bath and Wells as "affording an indifferent good road to Chippenham, thence to Bath is something rough and stony, and after to Wells over Mendip Down, a bad winter road." From Bristol to Weymouth: "a great part of it is a bad deep Way."

In 1719 a Frenchman, M. Misson, was travelling in England. His testimony is interesting. He says :—

They have several ways of travelling in England. The post is under a good regulation throughout, and the horses are better than those in France. There are coaches that go to all the great towns by moderate journeys; and others which they call flying coaches, that will travel twenty leagues a day and more, but these do not go to all places. They have no Messageries de chevaux as in France; but you may hire horses for what time you please. The sea and the rivers also furnish their respective conveniences

## COACHING DAYS

for travelling. I say nothing of the waggons, which are great carts covered in, that lumber along, but very heavily; only a few poor old women make use of this vehicle.

Probably M. Misson's "moderate journey" coaches travelled on the ordinary roads, and the "flying-coaches" travelled along the better ones. One thing is certain, that these coaches which flew at the extraordinary rate of between four and five miles an hour were not very common, as we find this always mentioned as a matter of admiration; and, at a much later date, the speed of the common stage-coaches could hardly have reached four miles.

It is not certain how many hours a coach-day contained. It probably signifies, in most instances, the whole period of day-light, with some intervals of refreshment; although those that did not pretend to be flying coaches were content to be on the road about twelve hours in the twenty-four. Probably the flying coaches at this period never reached five miles an hour, and the common coaches rarely reached, and perhaps never exceeded, four miles. In this early part of the century, no stage-coaches travelled by night: in time they began to avail themselves of moonlight nights, and ultimately, as at present, they went both by night and by day. At first, stage-coaches were interdicted from travelling on Sundays; but, about the middle of the century, a limited number were licensed to do so on some particular roads, and in the end all restriction was withdrawn.

A Mrs. Manley, in 1725, published a work entitled *A Stage-Coach Journey from London to Exeter*. Passengers were then four days on the road, and about forty-eight hours were employed in actual riding. In point of fact, the journey took five days in this instance, because a Sunday intervened, on which day,

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

as the stage-coaches did not travel, the passengers were detained at Salisbury.

It was summer ; and Mrs. Manley, who complains greatly of the hardships and fatigues of the journey, mentions that the passengers were roused every morning at 2 o'clock, left the inn at three, and about the same hour in the afternoon arrived at the end of the day's journey. When the passengers left the inn to enter the coach, a crowd of beggars were, at this early hour, found waiting for alms about the coach, "and would never leave it unblessed."

The company seemed to be allowed a pause at ten in the forenoon to take dinner. The lady appears very little satisfied with the fare : she says,—“They most unmercifully set us down to dinner, at ten o'clock, upon a great leg of mutton. It is the custom of these dining-stages to prepare one day beef, and another our present fare. It is ready against the coach comes ; and, though you should have a perfect antipathy, there is no remedy but fasting. The coachman begs your pardon ; he would not stay dressing a dinner for the King, (God bless him !) should he travel in his coach.”

The art of driving four-in-hand was not known in those days. When more than two horses were employed, the leader, or one of the leaders, was ridden by a postillion, as no coachman professed to control more horses than those fastened to the shaft.

This custom was retained much longer than some other early usages which occur in the history of stage-coaches. It appears that by 1740 stage-coaches had begun to travel by moonlight, at least on some roads. Fielding's "Joseph Andrews" was published about that time ; and the hero, after having been robbed by footpads in the night, is discovered by a stage-coach. "He just began to recover his senses as a stage-coach came by. The postilion, hearing a man's groans, stopped his horses, and told the coachman."

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The common people still continued, in general, to use the waggon, unless for the sake of the greater expedition they ventured upon the dangerous roof of the carriage, or nestled in the basket behind. Those who have read the work we have just mentioned will remember the horror of Mrs. Graveairs at the idea of admitting "a fellow in livery" inside the coach, notwithstanding the disabled condition in which he appeared.

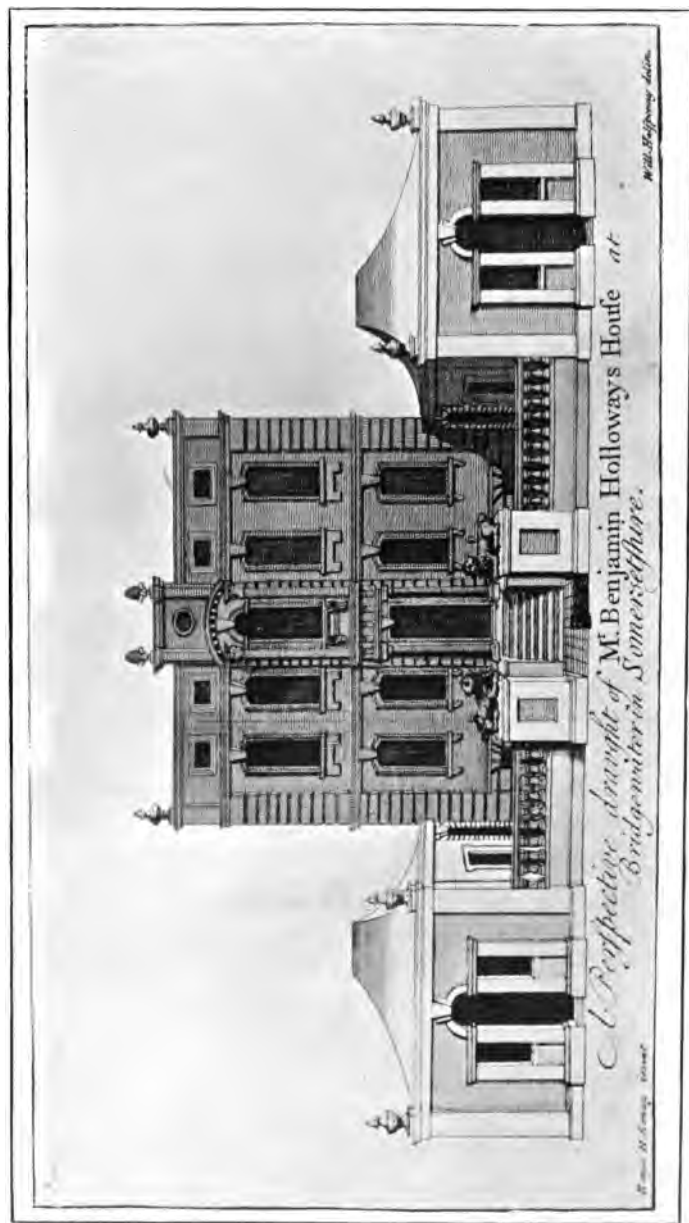
In the year 1828 *Tales of an Antiquary* appeared, and the author gives a good description of stage-coach travelling of the days somewhat preceding that date. The description fits in with the drawings of coaches which Hogarth gives in some of his pictures.

In my own young days, stage-coaches were constructed principally of a dull black leather, thickly studded, by way of ornament, with black, broad-headed nails, tracing out the panels; in the upper tier of which were four oval windows, with heavy, red, wooden frames, or leathern curtains. Upon the doors, also, were displayed, in large characters, the names of the places whence the coach started, and whither it went, stated in quaint and antique language. The vehicles themselves varied in shape. Sometimes they were like a distiller's vat, somewhat flattened, and hung equally balanced between the immense front and back springs. In other instances, they resembled a violincello-case, which was, past all comparison, the most fashionable form; and then they hung in a more genteel posture, namely, inclining on to the back springs, and giving to those who sat within the appearance of a stiff Guy Faux uneasily seated. The roofs of the coaches, in most cases, rose into a swelling curve, which was sometimes surrounded by a high iron guard. The coachman and the guard, who always held his carbine ready cocked upon his knee, then sat together; not, as at present, upon a close, compact, varnished seat, but over a very long and narrow boot, which passed under a large spreading ham-

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mer-cloth, hanging down on all sides, and finished with a flowing and most luxuriant fringe. Behind the coach was the immense basket, stretching far and wide beyond the body, to which it was attached by long iron bars or supports passing beneath it; though even these seemed scarcely equal to the enormous weight with which they were frequently loaded. These baskets were, however, never great favourites, although their difference of price caused them to be frequently well filled. The wheels of these old carriages were large, massive, ill-formed, and usually of a red colour; and the three horses that were affixed to the whole machine—the foremost of which was helped onward by carrying a huge, long-legged elf of a postilion, dressed in a cocked hat, with a large green and gold riding-coat,—were all so far parted from it by the great length of their traces, that it was with no little difficulty that the poor animals dragged their unwieldy burden along the road. It groaned and creaked at every fresh tug which they gave it, as a ship rocking, or beating up through a heavy sea strains all her timbers, with a low, moaning sound, as she drives over the contending waves.

In the middle of the eighteenth century stage-coach accidents were exceedingly frequent. They were due partly to the build of the coaches of that date, and partly, of course, to the bad roads. A writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1771 tries to indicate what is the matter, and to suggest remedies. The most dangerous element, he considered, was the great height of the body of the coach from the ground, and the number of passengers who sat upon the top. He wished much that riding on the top might be forbidden, yet that, he feared, would result in the coach-owners raising the inside fares, which would naturally preclude many people from travelling. Another contributory cause was the excessive



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roundness of the turnpike roads, which was sometimes so great as to make it dangerous for even a post-chaise to turn out of the middle of the road when it met another carriage, the sides being so steep. He suggested that the axle-trees should be lengthened so that the wheels should be placed a distance of five feet eight inches apart on the outside, instead of four feet eight inches, as they then were. Such a coach, he argued, would be far less easy to overturn, and since the body of the coach would also be proportionately widened, it would contain six inside passengers. Thus, he averred, the price of inside places would sink, and travelling would tend to grow cheaper.

Yet the demand for outside places did not diminish. The Annual Register for 1775 states that the stage-coaches of the time generally drove each with eight inside and sometimes with ten outside passengers. A correspondent in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1813 complains of some of the alterations in coach travelling which had taken place in his time.

He points out that of late years a great revolution had come, in journeying by stage-coaches, which had produced nearly the whole of those accidents which were attributed to the coachman. This was the fashion of preferring the outside to the inside seats of coaches.

If this fashion continued, he had no doubt that posterity would inquire what the inside of a coach was made for. It had already come to be considered as a receptacle specially appropriated to the effeminate, the sick, or the aged. This demand for outside places had produced two results; one was a rise in

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the price of such places, and the other increased accommodation before, behind, and at top for the increased number of persons who chose to travel in that way. People seemed to be quite unconscious that there was any more danger by riding with eighteen outsides than in walking with an equal number of persons on a grass plot ; though nothing could be clearer than that a vehicle thus overloaded at top, and comparatively empty within, was in great danger of being overturned.

Stage-coach passengers, he continues, learnt this preference from people of fashion, who at that period exhibited a decided preference for riding on the outside of their private carriages. It had necessarily altered the relative estimation in which inside and outside passengers were held, and had abolished the order of precedence formerly observed at country inns. There, in former times, while the insides were shown into a handsome dining parlour, the outsides were referred to the kitchen, or had their meal in some inferior apartment, and were considered as only a small degree above waggon passengers. But now, were an innkeeper to judge thus of stage-coach outsides, what dreadful blunders would he not make—what insults would he not offer ! Were he to estimate upon the old scale, he might shut up house in a week. The old gentleman proceeds to speak with some indignation of the disuse of legs engendered by the increased facilities for riding.

The time was, Sir, when from my country-house at the bottom of Gray's Inn Lane, I could, on a Sunday morning, from five o'clock or sooner, see hundreds beginning their journey on foot to places eight or ten miles

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distant ; but now the same class of people, and of the same age, are mounted aloft with a dozen and a half of lazy souls like themselves, and confine their walks to their friends' gardens—30 feet by 20, including a pond. Nay, what shocks me more, when I reflect on past times, is, to see even the Islington stages, at three or four o'clock in the afternoon, loaded inside and outside with hale, hearty, stout young brokers, Excise and Bank clerks, and other young gentlemen, who can learn only from their fathers for what purpose legs were given them.

“What would this ‘Old Insides,’ as he calls himself, have said about omnibuses?” asks the Editor. “He recommends, indeed, that insides in public conveyances should in future be dispensed with, and that vehicles should be constructed on the principle of calf-carts, capable of holding thirty or forty persons. From the tone of his complaints, it appears that this old person could hardly have been prepared to expect that nearly the reverse of what he proposes would be carried into effect. We have now vehicles without any outside passengers, yet providing accommodation inside for fourteen persons.”

When really fast-running coaches came thoroughly into general use, the conveyances used by English people seem to have gradually settled down into two great classes. One class, that is to say, carried passengers as quickly as it could; the other conveyed heavy goods at a slow rate of speed. Stage-waggon, with immense broad wheels, came into use. The wheels were made very broad in order to avoid destroying the roads, and such waggon as came up to a specified standard (in the breadth of their wheels) were permitted to pay a reduced toll in return for the good which they effected in crushing down

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and levelling the ruts. They acted, in fact, somewhat in a similar way to the steam-roller of to-day. Here is an advertisement which was published in the *Daily Advertiser* of April 9th, 1739. It speaks for itself.

“The old standing constant Froom Flying Waggon in Three Days. Sets out with Goods and Passengers from Froom for London every Monday by One o'clock in the morning, and will be at the King's Arms Inn, Holborn, by twelve o'clock at noon; from whence it will set out on Thursday morning by One o'clock for Amesbury, Shrewton, Chittern, Heytesbury, Warminster, Froom, and all other places adjacent, and will continue allowing each passenger fourteen pounds, and be at Froom on Saturday by Twelve at noon.

“JOSEPH CLAVEY.”

In April, 1767, an advertisement appeared in Crutwell's *Sherborne, Shaftesbury, and Dorchester Journal*, as follows:—

“The Proprietors of the Frome Stage Machine,

“In order to make it more agreeable to their Friends in the West, have engaged to set out Post Chaises from the Christopher Inn in Wells every Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday evenings, at Five o'clock, to stop at the George Inn, Shepton Mallett, and set out from thence at a quarter past six, to carry passengers and parcels to Frome, to be forwarded from thence to London in the One Day Flying Machine, which began on Sunday, April the 12th, 1767: Also a chaise from Frome every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evenings, to Shepton and Wells as soon as the Coach arrives from London.

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In "A Loyal Almanac," the *Vox Stellarum* for 1830, occurs a list of waggons connected with Bridgwater, as follows :—

Giles and Hooper's Waggon, leaves for London, Tuesday and Friday evenings : arrives from London, Wednesday and Saturday evenings.

Whitmarsh's Waggon, London and Bridgwater : Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday.

Snell's Waggon, Bristol and Exeter ; Ship-a-ground for Bristol and Exeter ; Tues., Thurs., and Saturday.

Brice's Waggon, Bristol and Exeter ; Rose and Crown every day.

Martin's Waggon, Bath and Taunton ; up Thursday, down Wednesdays and Saturdays. Rose and Crown.

Whippel's Waggon, Bristol and Bridgwater ; up Tuesday and Friday, down Wed. and Saturday.

Nation's late Powel's Waggon, Bristol and Minehead ; arrives Tuesday evening from Minehead, and proceeds to Bristol ; returns Friday morning to Minehead, Marquis of Wellington.

Chadwell's Waggon, from Bristol to Exeter every Monday, Wed., and Friday—stops at Giles and Hooper's office, George Lane.

Grandfield's Waggon, from Bath to Minehead and Dunster,—up Tuesdays and down Thursdays, stops at the White Horse.

Slocombe's Waggon, from Bristol to Stogumber, up Monday and down Wednesday, stops at Marquis of Wellington.

Lavin's Waggon, Wiveliscombe to Bristol ; up Wednesday, down Saturday, Marquis of Wellington.

Webber's Waggon ; Bridgwater, Taunton, and Honiton,—up Tuesday, Thurs., and Saturday, and returns the same evening. At the Three Crowns.

A long list is also found in *Robson's Commercial Dictionary*, indicating a very considerable waggon traffic indeed.

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*Pigott's Commercial Directory* for 1822 advertises a very large Bridgwater carrying trade by waggons.

To London, Giles and Hooper, from their warehouse, Mon. and Thursday. To London, Brown and Brice, Mon., Wed., and Friday. There were also two sets of Waggons to Bath, three to Bristol, one to Dunster, two to Exeter and the West, and one each to Stogumber, Taunton, Williton, and Wiveliscombe. From London to Bridgwater Waggons ran daily from the Castle and Falcon, Aldersgate St.; at 10 a.m. from the King's Arms, Snow Hill; at 12, from the Swan, Holborn Bridge; from the White Horse Cellar and Black Bear, Piccadilly; Mon., Wed., and Friday afternoons at 5, from the Van Swan, Great Carter Lane; daily from the Bell in Friday St.; from the Spread Eagle, and the Black Bear, in Piccadilly. They also ran from many country towns.

In Dampiet Street a sign formerly was exhibited over the premises of Messrs. Murliss and Brice, who were Waggon Owners, thus: "Waggons; to London in eight days!" These waggons, to carry both passengers and goods, were covered, and were drawn by four horses. Messrs. Giles and Hooper's stables occupied the site in St. Mary's Street afterwards covered by the Chapel of the Plymouth Brethren.

Before coming to the days of fast coaching, which forms the subject of the next chapter, it is interesting to watch the slowly increasing speed of the coaches. Towards the close of the seventeenth century the following advertisement had been exhibited to Londoners:—

### Flying Machine.

All those desirous to pass from London to Bath, or any other Place on their road, let them repair to the Bell Savage on Ludgate Hill in London and the White Lion at

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Bath, at both which places they may be received in a Stage Coach every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, which performs the whole journey in Three Days (if God permit) and sets forth at five in the morning. Passengers to pay One Pound five shillings each, who are allowed to carry fourteen pounds weight—for all above to pay three half-pence per Pound.

It is astonishing, however, to read the long-continued opposition which was maintained against any moderately rapid transit of people from place to place. Many people were afraid to go from home; afraid of the wider experiences of other places and other folk; afraid not only of accident by the way, but of the mere fact of changing the stay-at-home habits which had become an integral part of their life. It was borne in upon so many men, too, that coaches injured trade.

Before they (i.e. coaches) were set up, Travellers rode on Horseback, and men had Boots, Spurs, Saddles, Bridles, Saddle-Clothes, and good Riding-suits, Coats and Cloaks, Stockings and Hats; whereby the wool and leather of the kingdom was consumed, and the poor people set at work by Carding, Combing, Spinning, Knitting, Weaving, Fulling; and your Cloth-workers, Drapers, Tailors, Saddlers, Tanners, Curriers, Shoe-Makers, Spurriers, Lorryners, and Felt Makers, had a good employ. Besides, it is a great hurt to the Girdlers, Sword-Cutlers, Gun-Smiths, and Trunk-Makers; most gentlemen, before they travelled in their coaches, used to ride with Swords, Belts, Pistols, Holsters, Portmanteaus, and Hat Cases. And if they were women that travelled, they used to have Safeguards and Hoods, Side-saddles and Pillions, with Strappins, Saddle or Pillion Cloths, which (for the most part) were either laced or embroidered. Moreover, it was alleged, there were moral evils attending such wholesale

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and new means of travel. Passage to London being so easy, Gentlemen go to London oftener than they need, and their Ladies either with them, or, having the convenience of these coaches, quickly follow them. And when they are there they must be in the Mode, have all the new Fashions, buy all their Cloaths there, and go to Plays, Balls, and Treats, where they get such a habit of Jollity, and a love to Gayety and Pleasure, that nothing afterwards in the Country will serve them, if ever they should fix their minds to live there again. What must become of all the rest of the Inns on the Roads where these Coaches stay not? Take all the grand Roads in England, as York, Exeter, Bath, and others. There are about 500 Inns on each road, and these Coaches do not call at fifteen or sixteen of them; then what can follow, but that the rest be undone, and their Landlords lose their rents?

Such were the fears which are always incidental—at least with English people—to anything that is new. They were inevitable, and they were bound to arise. Caricatures were published, and terrible stories circulated, about the terrors and dangers of the way. But when Telford and McAdam came and showed people how to make splendid and safe roads, nothing could stop the immense impetus which was given to coach-travelling. It is said that a Somerset man, Mr. Gabriel Stone, of Somerset Farm, near Axbridge, was the first local authority to make really good roads. He, it was said, made his road so smooth and dry that the stage-coachmen complained it was too good, as it made both coachmen and horses careless, “so that they oftener tripped on this road than on the roads which were worse!” It was not long before Bridgwater was within a day’s journey of London. A new era had arisen, and the staid, quiet folk of the country towns could get into quick touch

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with the capital of the country, and with each new aspect of developing thought and life. The slow, lumbering Waggon was soon to be used for heavy goods only, and for the very indigent ; the aspiring traveller must now seek a swifter way.

## CHAPTER X

### COACHING DAYS

#### II

**B**EFORE the nineteenth century dawned there had been, as has been shown, a great development in English methods of travelling. But there was still room for improvement, and now this improvement was close at hand. Former records of the time taken to convey people, and to transmit news from one place to another, are apt to strike us now almost with astonishment. When Oliver Cromwell was made Lord Protector the news of the event did not reach Bridgwater, it is said, until nineteen days afterwards, and then they promptly set to work to ring the Church bells. Queen Elizabeth died on March 24th, 1603, and King James of Scotland was proclaimed as successor to the English throne on March 25th, yet it took three days for the news to reach York, one of the most important cities in the kingdom. James the First spent five weeks in travelling from Edinburgh to London, but then he did not like to be hurried, and royal progresses were necessarily slow. From London to Edinburgh used to take fourteen days. In the middle of the seventeenth century a coach journey from Oxford to London occupied two days; from Nottingham to

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London, four days. At the same period Sir William Dugdale took three days to journey from Coventry to London.

In the eighteenth century the speed of coaches quickened. Yet in 1742 the stage-coach which set out to Oxford from London, starting at 7 a.m., did not complete its journey until the evening of the next day. Since that time the distance has been travelled by coach in six hours. About 1750 it took one day and a half for the coach to reach Glasgow from Edinburgh. A few years later there was one coach which travelled between London and Edinburgh, journeying once every month. It took then from twelve to fourteen days to complete the journey. The attendants were not infrequently asked, in those days, to carry hatchets with them to lop off the branches of trees which might impede the passage of the coach, or its burden. It was, indeed, a most necessary precaution. From London to Exeter, in 1752, the fast coach took four days, in the following stages. Monday, dinner at Egham; put up for the night at Murrell's Green. Tuesday, dinner at Sutton; night at Salisbury. Wednesday, dinner at Blandford; night at Dorchester. Thursday, arrive at Exeter at one o'clock. Yet later on, before the railway days came, several coaches, which set out daily, made the journey from Edinburgh to London, and the reverse way, in from forty-five to forty-eight hours. This, surely, must have been one of the most charming of all coach rides in Britain.

The slow speed was caused then, of course, by the bad roads. A traveller in the year 1770 thus gives vent to his feelings at the condition of the turn-

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pike road over which he had to travel between Wigan and Preston. "I know not, in the whole range of language, terms sufficiently expressive to describe this infernal road. To look over a map, and perceive that it is a principal one, not only to some towns, but even whole counties, one would naturally conclude it to be at least decent, but let me most seriously caution all travellers who may accidentally purpose to travel this terrible county, to avoid it as they would the devil, for a thousand to one but they break their necks and limbs by overthrows and breakings down. They will here meet with ruts, which I actually measured, four feet deep, and floating with mud, only from a wet summer—what, therefore, must it be after a winter! The only mending it receives in places is the tumbling in some loose stones, which serves no other purpose but jolting a carriage in the most intolerable manner. These are not merely opinions, but facts, for I actually passed three carts broken down, in these eighteen miles of execrable memory." McAdam and Telford, however, soon afterwards set to work, with magnificent skill and success, upon many of the English roads. It was owing to their labours that coaches were ever able to travel fast. By the time that Palmer's mail coach between London and Bristol was started an immense improvement had been made. Then, a coach reached London from Bristol in one day, taking sixteen hours *en route*, or fourteen hours from Bath. By 1836 the Bath coach did the London journey in eleven hours.

The Holyhead mail from London was a very fast coach. "We had to keep eleven miles an hour, in-





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cluding stoppages," wrote Mr. Reynardson, the well-known gentleman Coachman. "Eleven miles an hour, including stoppages, stands for galloping at least the greater part of the way. The theory of eleven miles an hour and the practice are two different matters. I have done fourteen or fifteen miles in the hour, but to keep up eleven miles an hour for eighty or ninety miles is a somewhat serious affair, unless your cattle are very good."<sup>1</sup>

It is curious to notice how in these modern days of revived coach-driving, the really old hands who remember the doings of 1830 rather despise the methods of to-day. "The coachman of the present day has no idea of what a coach-load of former days was; he could have no idea what it was doomed to carry, unless he had been there to see. In the first place, there were four insides and twelve out, exclusive of the coachman and guard. The fore-boot was full of small parcels; the hind-boot was the same; the roof of the coach was piled up as high as it could be to allow of its passage under the archway of the inn; and boxes and carpet-bags, gun-cases, hampers, and every description of luggage for the sixteen people who were inside and out, were heaped up and hanging over the sides of the roof, which was all covered down with a tarpaulin, and securely strapped down with a broad leather strap. It was wonderful to behold, and wonderful to imagine how it could all be stowed away. On the very lamp-irons you would often see game baskets hung, and hares and pheasants dangling down. Under the coach

<sup>1</sup> *Down the Road*, by C. B. S. Birch Reynardson; Longmans, 1875.

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there was often swung a 'cradle,' into which various things which could go nowhere else were put; in fact the whole packing of a heavy load was marvellous, and what none but a guard of the olden time dare attempt."

Of course, right up to the very end of coach travelling, there were dangers. But these presently became utterly eclipsed by the terrible dread of the unknown horrors of railway accidents. "There is danger in travelling by coach," said the gentleman of the old school, "but after all, nothing to the railway. You get upset in a coach, and there you are. But get upset in a railway, and then, where are you?" The good old man considered, and roundly declared, that railways were an invention of the devil. He would modify his statement, in calmer moments, by saying that he would never do anything but post by road if railway trains were permitted to travel faster than fifteen miles an hour.

Yet it is pathetic to read the words of men who knew coaching in its very prime, and who lived on to see the railroads triumphant.

The sun is set that once shone out  
So bright upon those teams :  
The night has come, and all that's past  
Seems but as floating dreams.

One such writes upon the subject with quite a master hand. "The tea-kettle, with its steam," he says, "has taken the place of the four bright bays; the grimy engine-driver and the stoker have taken the place of the coachman; the guard or conductor in his blue coat and foreign-looking cap, has taken the place of the guard in red, with his glazed hat and

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cockade ; and the long mellow horn of former days is now replaced by a shrill and certainly not to be called mellow whistle. The railway carriage, it is true, is a large commodious affair, with its comfortable padded seats, windows that fit tight, and a lamp in the roof to turn darkness into light in the tunnels through which the train passes as it speeds on its headlong way through the bowels of the earth. A comfortable foot-warmer of tin or zinc filled with hot water warms the feet of the old ladies and gentlemen, and even of young ladies and young gentlemen ; and of little boys returning home for their holidays, or with saddened hearts going back to school."

"How different is all this from former days, when the stage coach, with its four in and twelve out, or the mail with its four in and three outside, exclusive of the coachman and guard, started upon its journey of perhaps 300 or 400 miles at eight o'clock at night, or at, let us say, six o'clock in the morning ! The snow is on the ground, the wind blowing piercingly cold, for it also freezes hard, the stars shining brighter than the brightest diamonds, and the morning, except for the light of the stars, as dark as pitch. It is six o'clock a.m., as they say in these days, in the month of February, 1824, and no chance of reaching the George and Blue Boar, Holborn, between nine or ten o'clock at night—a pretty look out for the three little boys who are now mounting on to the Regent coach at Stamford on their way back to school, wrapped in their long drab great-coats. The coach is piled up with luggage till it is loaded like a stage-waggon,

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and one only wonders how such a heavily laded conveyance ever reached its destination without breaking down or being upset.

"The three little fellows have mounted up to their seats on the top of the coach, and though they have been told by their anxious parents to be sure to go inside, persist in going, one on the box with the coachman, and the other two behind him, and declare manfully that they are not cold and never feel the cold. They have each got some straw; not new straw, for that is cold stuff, but straw out of the stables which has been a little used and trampled by the horses; and having shoved their little feet into it, instead of on to a hot foot-warmer, as in the present day, feel as cheery as possible. The boy of the present day has no idea what his grandfather suffered on his journey from six o'clock a.m. till his arrival at nine or ten p.m. at the George and Blue Boar, Holborn, on such a morning as I have tried to describe."

An excellent description, truly. Like all enthusiasts on the coaching times, he can scarcely touch upon his favourite subject without lamenting that such days could ever have passed away.

Mr. Stanley Harris, in *The Coaching Age*, is just as full of admiration for them. "In 1836 and 1837," he writes, "people frequented the great yards from which started the mails, east, west, north, and south—the Swan with Two Necks, the Bull and Mouth, and other similar yards; or they would await at Hyde Park Corner the mails going out of London by that route. What finer spectacle could be viewed than one of these Royal Mails, in full

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trim, with a fine team of four greys, both leaders carrying bar, and up to their bits, coach properly laden in and out, sometimes driven by some crack dragsman, with guard all in red and gold, and with his great tin horn at right angles with the mail, as he raises it to blow a cheery blast? The four-horse drags in Hyde Park are nothing to this. We know they come out for a drive, and will go in again ; but here, on a December evening, snow slightly falling, we saw in imagination this down mail encountering a thousand difficulties—we picture her as perhaps snowed up, or gallantly fighting her way through to her destination. The passengers we envied and held in respect, the outsiders wrapped up in their greatcoats with capes, the insiders closely packed, and their breath already frozen on the window-panes. Ah ! those were halcyon days.” Indeed they were ; their picturesqueness, their endurance of hardship, their love of a battle with wind and weather and cold and frost and storm, all made them so. They brought, it can scarcely be denied, the best out of men.

When George the Fourth came to the throne the most brilliant and successful coaching days set in. In his time the pace, organisation, appointments, and punctuality of coaches reached their zenith. Then, too, were the most skilful coachmen, and the best horses ; the coaches, also, in build, weight, design, and adaptability to their purpose attained their highest pitch of excellence. Possibly the year 1836 was the climax of their glory. It was in that year that Dickens’ book, *Pickwick Papers*, was published. Everyone will remember Sam Weller’s indignation when he saw the name “Moses Pickwick” inscribed

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upon the door of the coach by which he and his master were to travel. Probably Dickens had seen Pickwick's coach on one of his journeys to the West; possibly he took his hero's name from the incident. There is a place named Pickwick, near Corsham. It is ninety-seven miles from London. Pickwick, the Bath coach-proprietor, had, it is said, a great-grandfather, one Eleazar Pickwick, who was a foundling. Discovered upon the road near to Pickwick, he fell under the care of the guardians of that district, who, after a fashion not unusual in those days, named him after the place near to which he was found. Thus the foundling boy's name descended to the coaching proprietor of Bath, and eventually gave the title to one of the novelist's most popular works.

The West Country soon succeeded in possessing some of the best and fastest coaches that ran out of London. It will be remembered that Mr. Palmer, manager of the Bath Theatre, was the man who induced Pitt, the great statesman, to supersede the old system of postboys, whose contract rate of speed was five miles an hour. Palmer's plan was to carry the mails by mail-coaches, and, of course, it triumphed. Thus the first mail-coach that ever ran in England was that which left London for Bristol on Monday, August 2nd, 1784. It set out at 8 a.m., and reached Bristol at 11 p.m. Its speed was, of course, afterwards greatly accelerated. By 1837 it accomplished the journey in a little under twelve hours, doing the 121 miles at the rate of ten miles and a quarter per hour, including the fourteen changes on the way. But at that time the stage-coach was faster than the mail-coach. Two stage-

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coaches then were running on the Bristol Road, which travelled at the rate of eleven miles an hour. Fifteen or sixteen stage-coaches, day and night, ran between London and Bath ; and two mail-coaches, all well filled. By the year 1838 the Great Western Railway was opened as far as Slough, after which time the coaches ran only between that place and Bath. It was the premonitory year which warned people that the railway system must and would win in the end.

The Exeter Road, too, was a famous one for coaching. There was the Post Coach, which left London at 7 a.m., and reached Salisbury at 7.30 p.m. ; also the Old Coach, leaving Holborn at 3.30 p.m., arriving at Salisbury at seven the next morning. The Royal Auxiliary Mail left Holborn at 6.15 in the afternoon, and reached the New London Inn at Exeter at seven the next night. The Royal Mail set out from Lad Lane at 7.30 every evening, and travelled by Salisbury, Blandford, and Dorchester, to Exeter, arriving at 9.30 next evening ; the Regulator, too, did the journey from London to Exeter in twenty-six hours. One Exeter coach, the Mail, went from London by way of Devizes, Melksham, Wells, Bridgwater, Taunton, and Collumpton. It left the Swan with Two Necks every evening at 7.30. Another, the Subscription Coach, travelled from the Bull and Mouth, to Exeter, through Bagshot, Hartford Bridge, Hartley Row, Basingstoke, Whitchurch, Andover, Amesbury, Winterborne, Stoke, Deptford Inn, Hendon, Mere, Wincanton, Sparkford, Ilchester, Cartgate, and Ilminster. Although there was great

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rivalry on the various roads connecting London with all parts of England, the West of England coaches held their own well both as regards speed and turn-out.

Next come the various coaches connected with Bridgwater. They were numerous, and they are a complicated puzzle to work out. The *North Devon Telegraph* ran from the Castle and Falcon in Aldersgate Street every morning at nine, for the West. This coach travelled by Salisbury, Frome, Bridgwater, and other places, to Barnstaple. The *Royal Devonshire* from London (for Exeter) left Gerrard's Hall, Basing Lane, via Newbury, Marlborough, Devizes, Melksham, Bath, Bristol, Cross, and Bridgwater to Taunton and Exeter. Another coach left the Angel, St. Clement's, for Bath and Bristol, and from the latter place to Taunton, Wells, Bridgwater, and other places. A considerable further list must be given, dated 1840. The Bath and Exeter Mail, from Bath, at 11 in the forenoon; and from Exeter at 2.30 in the afternoon. The *Estafette*, to Birmingham and Devonport; up at 10.45, down at 2 o'clock, from the Clarence. The *Nonpareil* came from Bristol, at the Clarence at 10.30 a.m., and from Plymouth at 5.30 p.m. The *Exquisite* from Exeter reached the Clarence at 1.45 in the afternoon, and proceeded to Bristol and Cheltenham, reaching the latter town at 10.30 p.m.; it arrived from Bristol at the Clarence at 4.30, and at Exeter at 9.30 p.m. The *Herald* from Bath got in at 12.45, and from Exeter at the same hour. *John O'Groat* left the Clarence at 7.15 a.m. for Bristol, returning at 7 in the evening. The *Self-Defence* left the Albion at 7.30 a.m. for Bristol, re-



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turning at 7 p.m. The *Victoria*, to Taunton, left the New Inn at 9 a.m., and returned at 6 p.m. The *Economist* arrived at the Bristol Arms from Exeter at half-past one, and from Bristol at half-past three. *Martin's*, from Bath to Taunton, at the London Inn, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon; from Taunton, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, at a quarter past eleven in the morning. The *Speculator*, from Bristol to Minehead, at the London Inn every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 2 in the afternoon; from Minehead, Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at half-past eleven in the morning. The *Alcesta*, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, from the Clarence at 7 o'clock; from Bristol Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 9 o'clock in the evening. The *Westonian*, from Bristol to Barnstaple, up Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, arrived at the George Hotel at half-past twelve at noon; returned at half-past three on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. The *Swiftsure*, to London from the Clarence Hotel, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday morning at half-past seven, arrived at the Bell and Crown, Holborn, at 9 o'clock the same night; and returned from London every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, to Bridgwater at 9 o'clock the same evening.

This by no means exhausts the Bridgwater Coach List. It would probably be wearisome to attempt to complete it. When it is borne in mind that there were mail coaches and stage-coaches travelling continually to and from London, Bath, Bristol, Cheltenham, Yeovil, Barnstaple, Exeter, Plymouth, Minehead, and a very large number of intervening

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places, and that these coaches either passed through or started from Bridgwater, it will be realised how constant a succession of coaches was continually travelling through the streets of the town. The particulars given below of a mail which passed through Bridgwater from London, and its hours of arrival at various places *en route*, may be of interest. Its date is November, 1839. It was known as the Devonport, Exeter, and Bath Mail. Railway trains had then just begun to run in some districts. This mail coach started from that splendid old inn, the Swan with Two Necks, Lad Lane. The official notice (concerning the mails generally) was as follows.

### MAIL COACH ROUTES FROM AND TO LONDON

*Corrected to November 30th, 1839*

Showing the time at which the Mail passes through each place on its journey outwards and inwards. The Mails leave London at eight o'clock every evening except Sunday, when they set out one hour earlier; they arrive between the hours of six and seven in the morning. A mail from Liverpool, Manchester, and all the towns along the line of the Grand Junction and London and Birmingham Railways, which arrives at 2 p.m.; the Brighton Day Mail, which arrives at a quarter-past four in the afternoon, and the Dover Day Mail at 4.8 p.m.

To ascertain *exactly*<sup>1</sup> the time in the morning at which any Mail reaches the General Post Office, it is only necessary to add the difference between eight o'clock and the time at which the Mail passes through the first-named town on its outward route, to the time mentioned in the inward column opposite the same place. The distances are calculated from the General Post Office.

<sup>1</sup> This process appears to be an exceedingly simple one from the official notice. In practice it needs considerable care.

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### DEVONPORT, EXETER, AND BATH

Passes through.	Time at which the Mail passes.		Distance.
	From London.	To London.	
Hounslow .	9.12 p.m. ...	5.26 a.m. ...	12
Maidenhead .	10.40 p.m. ...	3.44 a.m. ...	29
Newbury .	1.53 a.m. ...	12.42 a.m. ...	58
Marlborough	3.43 a.m. ...	10.49 p.m. ...	77
Devizes .	5.6 a.m. ...	9.24 p.m. ...	91
Bath . .	7.0 a.m. ...	7.30 p.m. ...	109
Old Down .	8.50 a.m. ...	5.35 p.m. ...	122
Wells . .	9.27 a.m. ...	4.55 p.m. ...	129
Bridgwater .	11.30 a.m. ...	2.52 p.m. ...	149
Taunton .	12.35 p.m. ...	1.37 p.m. ...	160
Collumpton .	2.42 p.m. ...	11.38 p.m. ...	180
Exeter . .	3.57 p.m. ...	11.25 p.m. ...	193
Chudleigh .	5.40 p.m. ...	10.17 p.m. ...	204
Newton Abbot	6.18 p.m. ...	9.40 p.m. ...	210
Totnes . .	7.10 p.m. ...	8.47 p.m. ...	213
Devonport .	9.50 p.m. ...	6.0 p.m. ...	248

The above time-sheet gives a fair impression of the times, distances, hours, and general plan of working of one of the Bridgwater Mails which ran in the last days of Mail Coach journeys.

Of course the famous Bridgwater coach was the Swiftsure. This was the pride of the town, and justly so. Well horsed, well equipped within and without, and thoroughly well driven, it was the event of the morning to see it depart, and of the next evening to welcome its return. It ran, by the Piper's Inn, through Glastonbury, Wells, Shepton Mallet, Frome, Warminster, and Amesbury to Andover. This was the first long stage, and there Mr. Johns, the highly respected proprietor and coachman, left his coach, which was then taken on from Andover by another coachman to London. Similarly on the

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down journey Mr. Johns took command at Andover, and drove back into Bridgwater. The time of starting, and of returning, of the Swiftsure varied a little from year to year, but it did excellent time. To London in a little over thirteen hours from Bridgwater was no bad travelling, and it was a very pleasant and thoroughly interesting journey. On arriving at London the Swiftsure called at the White Bear, Piccadilly ; the Old White Horse Cellar, and finally put up at the Bell and Crown, Holborn.

Such was, to many Bridgwater people from seventy to a hundred years ago, probably the one long and important journey which they might make in the whole course of their lives. "My grandfather journeyed once to London and back in his lifetime," said an old friend, "and he was careful, at the advice of his lawyer, to make his Will before he went. He also had a hot bath on the night before he set out, so that in the event of an accident, as he said, he might make a clean corpse." The present day ways of living are frequently contrasted with the quieter methods of a century back. Habits have, indeed, very greatly changed since then. It is an age of haste, and also of much holiday-making. "It is the age of week-ends. Almost everybody you meet tells you that he wants a change. What is more, he has the change. By some means he manages to get away, and there must be few, even among the very poor, who live contentedly in the English capital from one year's end to another. We read with a sense of wonder the books which depict for us the old leisurely life and the quiet, respectable, orderly people who lived it. George Eliot, in *Adam*

## COACHING DAYS

*Bede* and other books, has described the ancient ways in remote country parts. Probably it is true to say that such a life would seem absolutely impossible to the great majority nowadays. Without a succession of notable events, without the action of novelty upon the mind, the children of the twentieth century could not endure existence. Not a hundred years ago people did not think of complaining of dull days, stupid evenings, wearisome tea-parties, ordinary sermons, early sleeping, dingy streets, and dirty lanes. All of these would nowadays be resented as injuries inflicted on us. But there was a time when they were matters of course. There was a time when a tea-party of any kind, or a sermon of any kind, was in itself a welcome relief from tedium. That was when coaches went eight miles in the hour, and the paper had news a week old. There was no quarrelling with these institutions. They were taken as part of the inevitable course of the world, and, perhaps, those who rode on coaches were as happy as those who now travel in motor-cars, while the weekly paper was read with a thoroughness and intensity and respect which the daily journal never receives. We must now, if possible, have something on for every day. The craving is for interest. The humblest will read exciting stories, and men with very small salaries manage somehow to get across the channel, and even go to Paris. There is a yearning for excitement, a longing for something to happen. The fear of all fears is the apprehension of dullness." There was little dullness in Bridgwater in the early part of the nineteenth century. Day by day a great succession of coaches

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passed through the streets. It was not like the passing of railway trains, hidden away on a line of steel rails frequently far away out of the town: protected and fenced off lest any one should be killed. It was all *evident*; to and fro through the South Gate and St. Mary's Street and the Cornhill and Fore Street, over the bridge, through Eastover and under the East Gate; in and out, out and in, all the day long. Early in the morning and late at night, sometimes in the middle of the night, still the coaches ran. The coaching-inns and posting-houses were agog with business and with busy men. The stabling was splendid and ample (much of it has been curtailed since then); the grooms and stablemen and coachmen and guards and attendants and ostlers swarmed about the inn-yards, a happy, contented, merry throng. It was the joy of every Bridgwater man, woman, and child to watch the mail or the stage-coach pass by; to compare its team and its get-up and its driver with those of other coaches; to feel a thrill of joy that England could produce such horses, such well-built coaches, and such stalwart men.

Let us stand, one fine morning in summer, in the early thirties of the last century, in the High Street of the old town. The Island, a group of houses pulled down more than fifty years ago, stood then in the middle of the street, reaching from opposite the Bristol Arms up to the Mansion House Inn. The end house of all (eastwards) was Mr. Peacock's the fruiterer's (at some time it was Bailey's the trunkmaker). Next to it (westwards) came an opening. Adjoining the opening stood the shop

## COACHING DAYS

of Mr. Lovern the shoemaker, and just above it was another passage-way through the Island houses, just about opposite to the Golden Ball. Next to that came Dean's, the earthenware shop (afterwards the business-place of Mr. Trapnell the clothier). Above it stood the larger house to which Mr. Lovern eventually moved, next below Walkam's the grocer. Then followed another opening, just opposite the narrow passage leading from High Street to St. Mary's Church. The passage-way was known as Danger's Ope. Next above this again came Tilley the barber, and beyond his house White's the butcher. West of this stood the business abode of Mr. Sparry the tinman, and next to it that of Hurford the stonemason. This last house reached up to about half-way in front of the Mansion House Inn. Between this group of houses and the north side of High Street was a narrow road (in front of where Mr. Culliford's shop now stands) known as the Shambles, where some butchers' stalls stood. Pain, Richards, and Johnson sold meat there in those days, at various stalls, even on Sunday mornings. But when St. Mary's Church bell ceased ringing the meat selling also stopped.

At that particular time the Swiftsure started at 6.30 a.m. Mr. Johns has mounted his box, and he is just about to start for Andover, on the first part of the journey to London. Old Donaghenny, the guard, is up too, radiant in his gay coat, and playing the cornopean most vigorously. The coach is full inside and out. Around it stand groups of friends, admiring and rather envying the passengers to London Town. They ply the passengers with mes-

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sages to friends, with letters, and with sundry commissions to be done in the great metropolis. Mr. Johns' brother, who is also a coaching-man, (he drives the Defence to and from Bristol every day) stands by, critically yet admiringly observing his brother's start. Time is up ; off they go ! A cheer arises from the group of spectators, who wildly wave their hands and their handkerchiefs. The travellers, possessed with a sense of daring and adventure, respond heartily, albeit with a feeling of dignity inseparable from coach-travellers on long distances. Across the Cornhill the well-groomed horses trot, over the Parret bridge, through East Gate, and then out into the Bath road towards Bawdrip, past the outskirts of grim old Sedgemoor battlefield. May they have a prosperous journey ! May they revel in the joys and in the adventures of those happy old coaching-days which have gone, and which will never come again !

## CHAPTER XI

### THE INNS

THE English Inns are intimately bound up with the history of the English people. Most writers of fiction, of any note, utilise the Inn largely as a medium for adventure, for unexpected meetings, and for tragedy. They have been effectively used also to describe the gathering together of quiet folk in villages and in country towns, where politics, local affairs, the crops and the weather, coming marriages and past deaths, and the whole stingless gossip of a country-side, were discussed, debated, and pondered. Charles Dickens was a master in describing Inn-life; so also was Henry Fielding. Who, either, can ever forget George Eliot's matchless descriptions in *Silas Marner*<sup>1</sup> of the long and solemn evening chats at the *Rainbow Inn* in the little village of Raveloe? The slow and intermittent conversation when the company first assembled; the gradual thawing, never to be hurried. "The pipes began to be puffed in a silence which had an air of severity; the more important customers, who drank spirits and sat nearest the fire, staring at each other as if a bet were depending on the first man

<sup>1</sup> *Silas Marner* was written in 1861. It is descriptive of rural life at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

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who winked ; while the beer drinkers, chiefly men in fustian jackets and smock-frocks, kept their eyelids down and rubbed their hands across their mouths, as if their draughts of beer were a funereal duty attended with embarrassing sadness. At last Mr. Snell, the landlord, a man of a neutral disposition, accustomed to stand aloof from human differences as those of beings who were all alike in need of liquor, broke silence, by saying in a doubtful tone to his cousin the butcher,

“ ‘Some folks ’ud say that was a fine beast you druv in yesterday, Bob?’ ”

“The butcher, a jolly, smiling, red-haired man, was not disposed to answer rashly. He gave a few puffs before he spat and replied, ‘And they wouldn’t be fur wrong, John.’ ”

“After this feeble, delusive thaw, the silence set in as severely as before.”

The *Rainbow*, however, was an insignificant village Inn, far from the haunts of crowds or of coaches, where the merest modicum of news rarely strayed, and where the company was limited to the simple folk of a thinly populated agricultural district. George Eliot’s description would not apply to towns, or to Inns where coach-travellers stopped.

It was, as has been seen already, greatly feared that Inns would suffer by reason of the introduction of coaches. Such Inns as the coaches stopped at, of course, would benefit ; others, it was thought, would be harmed. However this may have been, it is undeniable that the Inns from which the coaches started, at which they stopped at the end of their journey, and upon which they called *en route*, be-

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came famous places in every way. They were the *rendezvous* for all the neighbourhood; they grew to be large and stately houses, fitted well with every accommodation both for man and beast. Many of them still remain, dotted about here and there along the old coach roads. But their ancient glory has gone; they are too large for modern needs, and some of them have passed out of being, or have been transformed to other uses. Long after the old coaches ceased to run they carried on a struggling existence, but they could not permanently withstand the changed habits which came in with the introduction of the railroads, and so they shrank into quiet houses of entertainment, just fitted to supply the local needs. After a time the former hosts and hostesses died, and a new generation arose, which knew not the glamour and the prosperity of the coaching days.

As long as two hundred years ago some of the English Inns were suspected of connivance at many of the robberies which occurred in them. A late seventeenth-century writer (one Harrison) wrote: "I believe not that chapman or traveller in England is robbed by the waie without the knowledge of some of them, for when he commeth into the inne, and alighteth from his horse, the hostler forthwith is verie busie to take downe his budget or capcase in the yard from his saddle-bow, which he poiseth slilie in his hand to feele the weight thereof; or if he misse of this pitch, when the guest hath taken up his chamber, the chamberlaine that looketh to the making of the beds will be sure to remove it from the place where the owner hath set it, as if it were

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to set it more convenientlie some where else, whereby he getteth an inkling whether it be monie or other short wares, and whereof giveth warning to such od guests as hant the house, and are of his confederacie, to the better undoing of many an honest yeoman as he journieth by the waie."

Another book of similar date confirms the statement already made. "It is as common a custom, as a cunning policie in thieves, to place chamberlains in such great innes where cloathiers and graziers do lye; and by their large bribes to infect others, who were not of their own preferring; who noting your purses when you draw them, they'l gripe your cloak-bags, and feel the weight, and so inform the master thieves of what they think, and not those alone, but the Host himself is often as base as they, if it be left in charge with them all night; he to his roaring guests either gives item, or shews the purse itself, who spend liberally, in hope of a speedie recruit."<sup>1</sup>

As time passed on these suspicions faded away, simply because there was little or nothing to cause them to arise. There were, of course, other dangers on the road, which have been well—probably too well—chronicled. Highwaymen abounded, though not to the extent which has been supposed. The career of a highwayman had in it just that dash of romance, of dare-devil valour and of bold horsemanship, which was sufficient to captivate readers and hearers of these stories. They were exaggerated in detail, and they were multiplied in instance. They existed, and great losses occurred at times. But the greater vigilance of the authorities, and strict deal-

<sup>1</sup> *A brief yet notable Discovery of Housebreakers, etc.*, 1659.

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ing with those who offended, did its good work in time. Travellers, moreover, ever since men have travelled at all, have always run risks. Probably this will be so, so long as travelling lasts. Even to-day there are railway robberies, not of very infrequent recurrence. Yet no one, so far as is known, accuses the railway authorities of connivance in these evil deeds. It is obviously easier to steal valuables when they are in transit than when they are safely stowed away in the bank, or at home. Conveyance of things by road, rail, or sea has ever been, and must ever be, the thieves' opportunity.

The great London Coaching Inns were splendid places, admirably conducted and well managed. The *Bell and Crown*, Holborn; the *Old White Horse Cellar*, and *White Bear*, Piccadilly; the *Swan with two Necks*, Lad Lane; the *Spread Eagle*, Piccadilly; the *Bull and Mouth*, St. Martin's le grand; the *Saracen's Head*, Snow Hill; the *White Horse*, Fetter Lane; the *George and Blue Boar*, Holborn; the *Bull*, Aldgate; the *Golden Cross*, Charing Cross; the *Cross Keys*, Wood Street, and many another great Coaching House, were as well known to our people of the West, seventy or eighty years ago, as the *Clarence* and the *Bristol Arms* are in Bridgwater to-day. From these, and other great Inns, the Coaches for the West started, or called at them just after starting. All these Inns were no doubt the favourite meeting-places for West-country people, who went up to them, stayed in them, came home from them, and knew their hosts, their ways, and their servants thoroughly well. Probably the *Bell and Crown*, Holborn, to which the Swiftsure Coach

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travelled, may have been the most favourite Inn of all for Bridgwater travellers.

Some of the Country Inns on the various ways to the West were also noted places. One can only name a few of them. Among them were the *Castle*, Marlborough; the *Bear*, Hungerford; the *Pelican*, close to Newbury; the *King's Head*, Thatcham; the *Angel*, Woolhampton; the *Bear*, Maidenhead; the *Windmill*, Salt Hill; the *King's Arms*, Salisbury; the *George*, Amesbury; the *George*, Shepton Mallet; the *George*, Frome; the *George*, Ilminster; the *Greyhound*, Wells; and the well-known *Piper's Inn*, which was the first stage out of Bridgwater. Their number could, of course, be very largely added to. Bath and Bristol possessed famous Coaching Inns of their own. Bristol had the *Bush*, the *White Lion*, the *Plume of Feathers*, and the famous *Rummer*. It was from the latter Inn that the coaches to Bridgwater ran. Bath claimed the *York House*, the *White Hart*, the *Lion*, the *Angel*, and the *Castle and Ball*, from which last house the Bridgwater coaches started. These were only the leading Inns; others also, of course, abounded.

When Bridgwater and its Inns come to be reckoned with the task is by no means an easy one. It is not the purpose of this chapter to search out for old Inns which once existed in the Town, and now have ceased to be. The names, and even the very existence of some of them, are entirely forgotten now. Among many which now have ceased to be in use are the following: The *Rising Sun*, in Friarn Street; the *White Horse*, the *Royal George*, the *Mariner's Compass*, and the *Albion*, all in St. Mary's Street; the

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*Crown and Sceptre*, the *Greyhound*, the *Alexandra*, from West Street ; the *Plough*, from Angel Crescent ; the *Crown*, from Halswell Lane ; the *Three Tuns*, from Penel Orlieu ; the *Salmon*, from Salmon Parade. From Eastover the *Bath Arms*, the *Moulders' Arms*, the *George*, and the *Globe* have all gone. The *Seven Stars*, a noted house at election times, it was said, is no more. The *Castle*, the *Artillery Arms*, the *Grape-Vine*, the *Griffin*, the *Noah's Ark*, the *Rainbow*, and the *Albert* are also extinct. Of course there are many others which have passed away, time out of mind. The famous old *Swan*, one of the most noted Inns in the West of England, long ago was pulled down, or, at least, was made into shops. Many are the plots that were hatched therein ; many the dinners held ; many the roaring Jacobite songs sung, to be drowned, no doubt, in boisterous loyalist toasts. There was formerly an Inn named the *Bear*, on the Cornhill, nearly two centuries ago. A later small Inn named the *Swan* afterwards came into being in Friarn Street, but it has now disappeared.

A list of the existing Hotels, Inns, and Licensed Houses now in Bridgwater must be given, if only for the perusal of any one who may chance to read it, say, a hundred years hence, when fashion in these things may possibly have altered. The *Royal Clarence* owes its name, presumably, to a visit of some member of the Royal Family early in the last century. The site of this Hotel was formerly occupied by two Inns, the old *Crown*, facing the Cornhill, and the *Angel*, at the back. The *Angel* must either have given its name to, or taken it from Angel

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Crescent, leading to the old North Gate. The *Bristol Arms* clearly took its name from the noted seaport which is, and has long been, one of the greatest towns in England, and a famous centre of sea-trading.

The following evidently take their designations from sea-going occupations. The *Anchor*, the *British Flag*, *Compass*, *Dolphin*, *Hope and Anchor*, *Mariner's Arms*, the *North Pole*, *River Parrot* (formerly the *Whale*), the *Ship-Aground*, *Ship Afloat*, *Steam Packet*, *Sailor's Return*, *Sailor's Home*, the *Salmon* (St. John's Street, formerly the *Exeter*), and the *Shipwright's Arms* (formerly *Cross Keys*, and *Ring of Bells*). The *Fleur-de-Lis* (a very favourite old English sign), *Golden Ball*, *Golden Lion*, *Green Dragon*, *Three Crowns*, *White Lion*, and *Star* are derived, probably, from old heraldic bearings. The *Beaufort Arms*, *Tynte Arms* (formerly the *Blue Boar*), *Devonshire Arms*, *Barclay Arms*, and *Blake Arms* (formerly *Duke of Wellington*) come from family armorial bearings. The *King's Head*, *King's Arms*, *Queen's Head*, the *Queen*, *Royal Oak*, the *Alexandra* (formerly the *Crown*), and the *Crown* (St. John's Street) sufficiently explain themselves. Next come some signs connected with trade. The *Mason's Arms* (formerly the *Fighting-Cocks*), *Baker's Arms*, *Malt Shovel*, *Hatter's Arms* (formerly *Britannia*), the *Limekiln*, *Old Cheese House*, *Sheep Market*, and *Vintner's Arms* take their names from the respective trades indicated.

Some varied signs succeed to these. There are the *Globe* (formerly the *Sloop*), the *London*, *New Inn*, *Nag's Head*, *Rose and Crown*, *Fountain*, *Bell*,

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*Cock, Bèehive, Hope, Somerset, Waterloo House, Old First and Last*, the *Commercial* in Wellington Place, and another *Commercial*, the *Crowpill*, the *Cottage* in North Street, and also one in Albert Street, *Caledonia Tavern, Horse and Jockey, Halswell House, Foresters' Arms, Punch Bowl, Cardiff Arms*, and *Volunteer Arms*. The old *White Hart* still remains, and the *Market House*. The *Railway Hotel* and the *Bristol and Exeter* sufficiently record the coming of railroads to the Town. The *Old Oak* may possibly indicate a love for the Stuarts; the *Cross Rifles* is distinctly military; the *Bird-in-Hand*, *Bath Bridge, Bridgwater Arms, Bunch of Grapes*, and *Mansion House* call for no special description. There remain still three Inns, the *Cow and Butcher*, the *Bull and Butcher*, and the *Duke of Monmouth*. The two first are situate near to where the old shambles, or butchers' stalls, used to be, close by where the group of houses known as the Island stood. This may account for the names of the signs. But *Bull and Butcher* is interpreted in two ways; as "Boleyn Butcher," referring to the reproach cast upon Henry VIII in regard to his second wife; and also "Boulogne Butcher," meaning Napoleon Buonaparte, the great giant or butcher who was believed to be coming over from Boulogne to kill all the English people. The reader must decide. There still remains the *Duke of Monmouth*, a fine old house, formerly known as the *Lamb*. Its sign has been changed only in modern times.

This makes a total of eighty-three licensed houses, the population being, probably, somewhere near to sixteen thousand, or possibly more. This equals a

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ratio of one licensed house to about every two hundred of the people. It seems to be a large proportion.

In the year 1822 the *Crown*, the *Angel*, the *Globe*, the *George*, and the *London* are recorded as being the Bridgwater Coaching Inns. The waggons and vans started, in the same year, from the *Valiant Soldier*, the *Globe*, the *Rose and Crown*, the *Three Saddles*, the *Duke of Wellington*, and from the ware-houses of Giles and Hooper,<sup>1</sup> and of Brown and Brice.

A few years later, by 1839, changes had come in the town. The old *Crown* and the *Angel* were no more, the *Royal Clarence* had taken their place. The coaching houses then were the *Clarence*, the *Albion*, the *George*, the *Rose and Crown*, the *Bristol Arms*, the *Globe*, and the *New Inn*. In addition to these the following Inns were all connected with the waggon and carrying trade, and were starting-places or houses of call for these vehicles: the *White Horse*, *Ship-Aground*, *White Hart*, *Three Crowns*, *Star*, *Marquis of Wellington*, *Valiant Soldier*, *Salmon*, *Lamb*, and the *Fleur-de-Lis*. Brice's waggon office in Dampiet Street was also a starting-place.

A notice written in one of the business directories of that period, when so many changes were coming, may be of interest. "The principal streets of the town," says the writer, "are lighted with gas, oil

<sup>1</sup> Giles and Hooper must have had an enormous business. In 1840 they were advertised to carry goods to Barnstaple, Bradford, Bruton, Cheltenham, Devizes, Exeter, Falmouth, Frome, Gloucester, Hereford, Marlborough, Mere, Monmouth, Newbury, Plymouth, Reading, Swindon, Taunton, Tiverton, Wells, Warminster, Wincanton, Winscomb, and Yeovil. They had a large business place in Bridgwater.



MANSION HOUSE LANE

*Facing page 178*



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lamps being still in use in the back streets. The town is well paved and supplied with excellent water: the streets generally are wide and regular. The river is navigable up to the quay for vessels of 200 tons burden. There is a communication with Taunton and Chard by means of the Taunton and Bridgwater Canal, which is now in course of being extended to a considerable distance lower down the river, terminating at its junction therewith in a spacious floating dock, and a basin communicating with the river by means of two locks, one a large lock, the other large enough to admit vessels of from 200 to 300 tons burden. The dock is intended to contain a depth of 22 feet of water, and will float vessels of 500 or 600 tons. There will be also warehouses and wharves for the storing and landing goods.

“A canal is in contemplation from this dock to Combech, a distance of about four miles, for ships of 500 or 600 tons, which, should it take place, will, no doubt—in conjunction with the Bristol and Exeter Railway, which is not yet completed, but the works of which are proceeding with energy—make Bridgwater a still more lively and bustling town than it now is; as it may be expected that many large ships which are now obliged to go up to Bristol will take advantage of the facilities offered, and land their cargoes here, thereby saving a great expense to the consumer in land carriage, besides avoiding the delay of proceeding up to the Bristol Docks.” The Combech Canal was never made, and the joyful hope that Bridgwater might capture some of the Bristol shipping trade has not been fulfilled.

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

"The number of vessels registered in this port," continues the chronicler of 1839, "averages fifty in number and seventy in tons burden. These vessels trade with North America, the West Indies, the ports of the Baltic, the Mediterranean, Ireland, Wales, and other places. The coal and iron trades with Wales predominate. The humbler inhabitants are chiefly employed in making common bricks, and tiles, and bricks for the purpose of scouring; the materials for the latter are dug out of the bed of the river." Then follows a paragraph which is, for the purpose of this chapter, very much *ad rem*. "The hotels and commercial inns of Bridgwater are commodious and respectable, and replete with every convenience." The writer places in the first rank the *Clarence*, the *George*, the *Bristol Arms*, the *Globe*, and the *Albion*. Such were the position and the reputation of Bridgwater Inns seventy years ago.

Four other London Inns ought to be named (in addition to what have already been mentioned) as being in almost daily touch with Bridgwater through the waggon traffic. They were the *King's Arms*, Snow Hill; the *Castle and Falcon*, Aldersgate Street; the *Elephant*, Fore Street, Cripplegate; and the *Saracen's Head*, Friday Street. A very poor person who could not afford the expense of a fast coach might travel to London by waggon, and would be set down at one of these Inns.

With the disappearance of coaches the Hotels and Inns, of course, changed their ways. Like all other institutions, they had to adapt themselves to the new needs of a newer day. The modern Inn needs neither description nor panegyric. It meets a want which

## THE INNS

is as old as history, and which is with us still. The famous Inns of England are one of many pleasant links with the past, and they are of exceeding interest. Scattered up and down in Bridgwater are some funny, quaint little corners in quaint little Inn rooms, which, could they but speak, might have many a story to tell. Yet, if walls have ears, they have no tongue, and so they wisely keep their secrets to themselves.

## CHAPTER XII

### FAIRS, HOLIDAYS, AND AMUSEMENTS

**K**ING John of England bears an evil name in history, but he was an exceedingly popular man in Somerset. In Bridgwater there is no doubt that he was for centuries looked upon as a great and true benefactor to the town. So, in a very real sense, he was, for in the early part of the thirteenth century kings possessed an enormous personal power; they could by a stroke of the pen make or mar a town, establish it, or let it languish in neglect. So when King John gave to his "beloved and faithful William Briwere" permission to fortify a castle, and further promised that "Bridgwater shall be a free borough, and that there be a free market there, and a fair every year that shall last during eight days, that is to say, from the day of the Nativity of the Blessed John Baptist," with "the other liberties and free customs appertaining to a free borough, and to a market and fair," he conferred upon the place very tangible benefits, and gave to it its first badge of recognised municipal dignity. One detail of the King's benefaction was his grant of *stallage*, i.e. the right of erecting stalls in the fair, which afterwards grew into an important privilege.

## FAIRS, HOLIDAYS, AND AMUSEMENTS

By degrees four fairs came to be established in the town, which varied slightly as to their dates at different periods of the borough history. They were held (1) on the second Thursday in Lent (or on the first Monday in Lent); (2) at Midsummer, the 24th of June; (3) on October 2nd, 3rd, and 4th (or at the latter end of September), known as the celebrated St. Matthew's Fair; and (4) on December 27th or 28th; as well as a great market for the sale of cattle on the last Thursday in November. The various changes of date of these fairs need not be recorded. At present the Bridgwater fairs are publicly advertised to be held on the last Wednesday in January, in March, and in June; also (St. Matthew's Fair) on the last Wednesday in September and the two following days. The great winter cattle market-day is now the first Wednesday in December.

In few things have the customs of English life changed more completely than in the use which is now made of the fair-days, as compared with what the use was, say, a hundred or even sixty years ago. Before the time of railroads people travelled but little. A journey to London in a stage-coach was frequently the great event of a man's life, and the vast majority of people never made that journey at all. Those were, pre-eminently, stay-at-home days. Coach travelling was a costly matter, and it was usually confined to the rich, the well-to-do business man or merchant, the lady or gentleman travelling for pleasure, or those whom necessity obliged to journey from home. Neither was there then, amongst the great majority

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

of persons, any great desire to travel. "Their sober wishes never learned to stray." The bad state of the roads alone would have curtailed their means of travel, even had they wished for it. Riding on horseback was the usual mode of travel before the coaching days came, and even that was a luxury limited to the few. Great numbers of people in the villages lived and died without even seeing any place more thrilling than the nearest market town, and there were some who never were known to have left the boundaries of their own parish. To say that our ancestors led lives far less tinted with excitement than our own is the simplest truism. With them the ceaseless routine of daily duties sufficed, news was scarce, letters were the rarest of luxuries; the outside world went on its way heedless of the villages and their folk, while the latter plodded on through life almost equally heedless of the outer world. Men's wants were fewer then, and they were more easily satisfied.

This being so, any legitimate festivity or excitement which came in the way of people living in the villages, or even in towns such as Bridgwater, came as a welcome boon indeed. Christmas, Easter, Whitsuntide, Michaelmas, were great Church festivals, and they were celebrated with a zest which was quite unaffected and sincere. Apart from religious feeling, these time-honoured festivals brought gladness, social intercourse, feasting, and merry-making in their train, hence they were welcomed with glee, and looked forward to for many a long day beforehand. The Church's festivals, the village feast (frequently held on the day of

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the saint to whom the parish church was dedicated), the harvest home, and some rural festivities came as happy interludes in lives which were monotonous in their routine, and circumscribed in all experiences that lay outside their intensely quiet lives. One of the most important of these was Bridgwater Fair. St. Matthew's Fair was *the* great event, for it lasted three days ; the other three fairs were as minor satellites, overshadowed by the superior luminary.

Then, as well as the recreative and social side of the fairs, there was also the business aspect. The amount of business transacted at these gatherings was simply enormous, and far exceeding what is usually believed. Shops were in those days greatly inferior in scope and far fewer in number than now. But the manufacturers and merchants who were the great traders made it a point of custom to attend the great English fairs, either personally or by their representatives, and there were exhibited the rarest new productions, the most tempting bargains, and the newest improvements in the things which then ranked as the most widely-needed commodities of the hour. People from the villages round Bridgwater would take a house or lodgings for the whole fair-week. Thrifty housewives would lay in stores of cloth, or woollen goods, or boots and shoes for a whole year ahead. The amount of money which changed hands was very large indeed. Merchants and dealers came prepared to sell, and men and women came fully prepared to buy ; old and well-known business firms, trusted and tested, went the round of the chief English

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fairs year after year. In this way the business transactions at the popular gatherings grew to be very considerable ; the meetings constituted the most important mercantile and social events of the year. The *Bridgwater Alfred* newspaper for October 7th, 1833, wrote thus :—

Bridgwater Matthew's Fair on Wednesday was very numerously attended. The quantity of cheese pitched amounted to two hundred tons, but of this not more than eighty tons were sold. During the early part of the day business was very slack ; there was a very small supply of old cheese of prime quality ; the best fetched 51s. 6d. per cwt. ; the prices ranged from 42s. to 51s. 6d., whilst skim cheese brought from 30s. to 34s. per cwt. The great factors had travelled round the marshes a week or ten days previously to the fair, and had purchased several picked lots of old cheese from prime dairies at considerably higher prices. The quantity of cheese taken away from the fair unsold was 120 tons. Fat beef only reached from 8s. to 9s. per score, but the quality was considered not so good as had usually been seen at this fair in former years. Lean cattle was in great abundance, so as to be quite a drug. Prices were accordingly very low ; the present scarcity of feed, in consequence of the long continued drought, had caused the farmers to push out their lean stock in greater numbers than usual, for the purpose of economising fodder ; many were therefore driven home unsold. Fat sheep sold from 5d. to 6d. per lb., and lean sheep were so numerous as to be nearly unsaleable, for the reason given above as to cattle, there being no feed. In the Horse Fair cart colts of good figure sold at high prices, but inferior horses, from their great number, went off slowly, and many were taken home unsold. The scarcity of money was universally complained of, and this, added to the amazing supply of every article both of live and dead stock, usually exhibited at this fair, where so many persons were anxious to sell, that high prices could not be looked for, except the article wanted

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was of first-rate quality. There was a very great number of pickpockets and low gamblers present, so as to resemble a mob of thieves, but still we have not heard of many losses—indeed their numbers enabled those who had property about them to be upon their guard, and to take the necessary measures of protection. The supply of boots and shoes at this fair was immense; there was at least a hundred standings of shoemakers, this being the great mart for those articles, and probably a greater stock was exhibited for sale here than at any other fair in the West of England. The weather being remarkably fine, the company on the second day, which may be called the Pleasure Fair, might have been compared to a rapid and overflowing tide, so that from the continual influx of people into the town it might have been thought that the whole population of Somersetshire had been congregated at Bridgwater.

At the St. Matthew's Fair of 1832 the same paper reported there was "a greater quantity of cheese pitched for sale than has been known for a number of years, the sale for which was rather dull in the early part of the morning, but towards the close of the day nearly the whole was disposed of at the following prices: best from 50s. to 60s.; seconds from 50s. to 56s.; and inferior from 25s. to 28s. per cwt. Bacon from 6d. to 6½d. per lb.

"To prevent the dangerous consequences which might be fairly apprehended at this season from the crowds of strolling vagabonds which infest fairs, our Magistrates, with laudable attention to the public welfare, swore in thirty special constables, who, with the regular constabulary force, were employed in protecting the public from the inroads of these pests. Three persons were committed during the week for petty offences, and so suc-

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cessful were the precautionary measures taken by the Magistrates, that we have not heard of any of those instances of fraud and outrage which used to be so prevalent at St. Matthew's Fair."

An old inhabitant of the town, who has himself been present at many fairs many years ago, has given some details about them which show how very popular they were, and how much interest they aroused. A great quantity of cloth was brought to St. Matthew's Fair (and to the others) for sale by the manufacturers, notably from Yorkshire and from Trowbridge. They had their stalls in front of the Old Cock Inn and the adjacent cottages, in St. Matthew's fields. In one year in the thirties a spectator counted a hundred and fifty-two standings for the sale of boots and shoes. There were also from eight to a dozen blanket stalls, and abundance of stands for the sale of ready-made clothes. Hatton from Taunton and Burnell from Bridgwater—at the Noah's Ark, at one time a tailor's shop—were noted clothiers, greatly in evidence. Hamlyn's ready-made clothes-shop, also, did a great trade at the fair. There were also on sale, at stands and stalls in St. Matthew's fields and elsewhere, pattens and cloaks, millinery, ladies' caps, straw bonnets, umbrellas, washing blue, corks, bungs, toys of every description, gingerbread, sweets, coopers' goods, tubs and buckets, crockery in huge quantities, and a variety of every kind then in vogue. There was naturally a large supply of horses, ponies, beasts, sheep, meat, and agricultural produce generally. Five rows of booths were allotted to the sale of intoxicating liquors, almost forming a street. In

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West Street nearly every other house was licensed for the sale of drink, beer, and cider. Instruments of music played all along the streets, both within and without the houses ; on the upper floors (wisely propped up with poles as supports) dancing was vigorously indulged in. Blind fiddlers played. Out of the windows hung poles, covered with ribbons, little toy ships, pumpkins, vegetable marrows, with other delicacies, indicating that drink might be had within. West Street was an exceedingly busy and noisy place at fair times.

This by no means exhausts the attractions which St. Matthew's Fair presented. There were stalls for the sale of top hats—two of Jarman's stalls and two of Shute's. Two circuses—one was the famous Ryan's Circus—attended ; Lawrence's Theatre and Lismore's Theatre drew great crowds ; Wombwell's Wild Beast Show and Mr. Middleton's dancing dolls were in full evidence. The constables of the town had their hands full ; on Sundays it was their duty to see that the public-houses, and also the fair booths and licensed extra houses sold no drink during Church service hours. The days of police were not as yet ; constables living in various streets were responsible for keeping the peace, and in times of excitement it was necessary largely to augment their number. There was, it is to be feared, a good deal of gambling. Thimble-rigging and pricking the garter (two favourite games of chance), illegal as they were, were largely indulged in, and many a country lad was swindled out of his little savings for the fair's delights. The gathering, like other kindred institutions, had its

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bad as well as its useful side. There were evils, and there were some dangers, at Bridgwater Fair.

The other fairs were conducted on a minor scale, but they attracted great crowds, and much business was done. Cheeses abounded in vast quantities. They were placed along the sides of the street, reaching from where Messrs. Head's wine premises now stand, past the old Cheese House, along St. Mary's Street (south side) to Friarn Street (then known, at its northern part, as Horse Pool Street). They were ranged along this latter street for a little distance on both sides of the road ; down St. Mary's Street, on both sides, for some distance towards where the South Gate was ; along Dampiet Street, and up St. Mary's Street (north side) as far as the Alexandra Inn. At the Midsummer fair cherry stalls extended from where Mr. Buffett's shop now stands, as far as to Messrs. Oliver's boot shop. At the Lent fair the same space was used for orange stalls. The boot and shoe stalls covered a very large space on the Cornhill, and the Yorkshire cloth standings also. Bootmakers from Langport, Bristol, and from some of the villages brought boots for sale ; the country tailors came in to buy their cloth. Purchasers tried on their shoes on the pavement ; every other place was full. The Midsummer horse fair was held in Eastover, where a great trade was done. Horses were placed on each side of the main street in Eastover, from the Globe Inn (where the Young Men's Christian Association now is) down as far as the Queen's Head. The *Globe* had splendid stabling, being an old coaching house. These particulars, of course, by no means exhaust

# Real Horses,!!

The LAST NIGHT of Performing here.

Theatre, Bridgwater.

On FRIDAY Evening, August 12th, 1814, will be presented a Grand MELO  
DRAMA, (never acted here,) called,

## LODOISKA, OR THE Noble Cossacks.

Written by J. P. Kemble, Esq. and performed in London with unexampled applause.  
It has lately received considerable alterations, many pointed allusions to events that occurred  
on the continent, during the war; which, with the introduction of REAL HORSES,  
render it a spectacle at once effective and interesting.

Baron Lovinski, ——— Mr. HALLAM.  
Spiliski, (disguised as a Page,) Master HICKERTON.  
Count Florenski, Mr. HEWETT. Lopatinski, Mr. LLOYD.  
Varbel, Mr. WILLIS. Udvolzhski, Mr. HEARN.  
Ihoracki, ——— Mr. WINDGAST.  
And Kers Khan, (Heroic Chief of the Cossacks) Mr. HERBERT LEE.

Lodoiska, (a Princess,) Mrs YOUNG.  
Circassian Slave, ——— Miss BENCE.  
Female Captives, Miss S. BENCE, Mrs BROWN, &c. &c.  
And KERA, (the Heroine of a chosen Band,) Mrs LOADER.

Polanders, Tartars, and Cossacks by Messrs Johns, James, Phillips &c.  
Incidental to the Piece.—The SOMBER FOREST.—The BIVOUACING of the  
Cossacks.—The Castle of Lovoski.—Entrance of the chosen Band.—KERA, (the  
Amazonian Heroine, mounted on a Tartarian Courser.—SPILISKI, (her Page)  
mounted on a Polanderic Steed.—The Summing of the Fortness by the Cossacks.—  
Grand Route.—Double BROAD SWORD Combat.—Final overthrow of the T.T.  
RAVY, and Restoration of PEACE and HAPPINESS.

After the PLAY, a Popular SONG, by Mr. HEARN.

A DANCE by Miss S. Bence.

COMIC SONG, by Mr. WILLIS

After which the Entertainment of the

## Irishman in London

Old Frost, Mr. Lloyd. Seymour, Mr. Hewitt. Colony, Mr. Hallam.  
Edward, Mr. Willis. Cymon, Mr. Hearn. And Morris Delany, Mr. Lee.  
Capitons, Mr. Loader. Cubba, Mrs Brown. And Louisa, (with a song) Miss Bence.  
To conclude with a DANCE, by Mr. Herbert Lee. &c

Nothing under Full Price till the end of Lodoiska. Cans, Typ. Bridgwater.



## FAIRS, HOLIDAYS, AND AMUSEMENTS

or even fully indicate the details of the trade and commerce done at the four Bridgwater fairs. Almost everything movable that had any sale at all was brought into the fair. Purchasers came to buy what they wanted, and stayed to purchase what the sellers could persuade them to have. There was a great deal of haggling, for that was part of the process of sale and purchase in those days. The market, doubtless, ruled prices then as now. But at fairs so many things were sold which stood outside market-price rules, hence a prolonged contest between buyer and seller became inevitable. People had more leisure then ; there was less hurry. Bargaining was a pleasant occupation up to a certain point. It afforded opportunity for wit and for retort. It was pleasant to score off a salesman in the presence of a fellow-purchaser. The salesman must never score off a customer, that would be fatal. And the joy, too, on returning home, to explain and exhibit the marvellous bargains purchased, to recite the adventures experienced, and to tell of the wonderful sights and scenes in the fair, was great indeed. No wonder that fairs were popular. They broke the monotony of life ; people met their friends and relatives ; experiences were exchanged, courtships begun, marriages planned, business schemes set on foot. The old came to buy and to bargain, the young came to see the sights and to go to the theatres and shows. It was the lad's first glimpse of life ; the country girl's first peep at the doings of the town. Rough and ready, no doubt, but still it was an education, and it ushered country people into the presence of new ideas and experi-

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ences, and brought them into touch with a little of the news and the doings of a greater world than they before had known. The Bridgwater Theatre had its thrilling entertainments to offer, and the Horse Races held in the neighbourhood of the town proved ever a great attraction to the people.

Bridgwater also had other festivities and joys. Eastover, not to be outdone by the western side of the town, celebrated its revels, which long held sway with great success. Sports were arranged on the usual scale and in the manner common to West-country towns, and the fun at these gatherings was fast and furious. The following note, published in a local newspaper on June 4th, 1832, might at first sight be a little misleading. It suggests a solemn municipal function.

The Anniversary Dinner of the Mayor and Corporation of Eastover was held at the Globe Inn, on Tuesday last, Edward Bryant, jun. Esq., in the Chair. An excellent dinner and ample attendance was provided by Mr. Thyer, whose endeavours to please were properly appreciated by a numerous and respectable party. It appeared to be equally the determination of the chairman and the company to avoid any topic that could by possibility break in upon the harmony which ought to prevail on such occasions. The party broke up at a late hour, highly pleased with the good feeling which had been displayed, and the good taste with which the duties of the Chair had been performed, under circumstances rendered unusually trying by passing events, and requiring no common degree of circumspection.

Eastover did not, as might be supposed from the above lines, possess a mayor and corporation, but it grew to be a sort of annual joke to seize upon

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some popular man, frequently the landlord of one of the inns, and elect him a sort of mock mayor for the occasion. A highly festive dinner was part of the programme, which was duly announced in the newspapers with all solemnity. On May 27th, 1833, the coming event was thus advertised.

The Annual Dinner of the Mayor and Corporation of St. John's, Eastover, takes place on Wednesday next, at the Globe Tavern, when the Mayor elect will be installed with all the customary formalities. William Stradling, Esq., has been appointed to preside at the feast, and a numerous party is expected to honour the Mayor upon this occasion.

Eighteen hundred and thirty-two, of course, was the Reform Bill year, when political feeling ran high. Probably the Eastover mayor and corporation were exceedingly wise in excluding politics from discussion at their dinner. Mr. Thyer, of the Globe Inn, proved to be a very popular Eastover mayor. It was the custom to organise a great procession through the streets, through which the mayor of the day was carried, seated aloft in a chair gaily decked with laurels. Various inn-keepers or other popular persons were chosen year after year. Mr. York, landlord of the *Ship Aground*, took his turn in the high office; Mr. Bullen, of the *White Hart*; Mr. Jesty, of the *Bunch of Grapes*; and Mr. Joseph Francis, the plumber. A greasy pole was erected near where Mr. Waddon's premises now stand, and the usual athletic contests, races, and so on were indulged in. The whole thing was got up to enliven the times and the people, and it was looked upon as an ex-

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cellent joke. It was connected, obviously, very much with the inns and with those who frequented them, and sometimes the proceedings were possibly too jubilant.

Upon one occasion (it was during the mayoralty of Mr. Ford, i.e. a *bona fide* Mayor of Bridgwater, not an Eastover mayor) some farmers were assembled within the *White Hart*, and being excited, began to throw the bowls and pins from the skittle alley out of the windows at the crowd. The latter retorted, returning the bowls with a good deal of vehemence and smashing the windows to atoms. A most uproarious scene ensued, and eventually the Mayor had to read the Riot Act, the few constables present being utterly unable to quell the storm. This scene, however, was the outcome of severe political feeling, which was ever apt to assert itself upon the most trivial occasions. When it came, like Cæsar, it conquered. Within the *White Hart*, it is alleged, were the Tories; without were the Whigs. This, of course, explained everything. Such conduct was natural, nay, in the opinion of some, it was highly laudable. Politics in those days were useful in providing amusement as well as instruction; they exonerated all excess, they condoned all violence. It was the way people enjoyed themselves sixty or seventy years ago.

On May the 29th, Oak Apple Day, the Pig Cross Revels, for the western part of Bridgwater, took place. Oak boughs were exhibited in front of all the inns, not so much, probably, from any intense feeling of affection towards the Stuarts as from a conviction that it was the proper thing to do, and

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that the custom in some remote way implied a knowledge of English history and a spirit of loyalty. Between the cattle market and the *Mason's Arms* (in those days the inn was known as the *Fighting Cocks*) a greased high pole was erected, at the top of which a leg of mutton was placed, or possibly a *box-hat*. A man named Dando (he only died a few years ago) was a great hero in those days, and frequently won the leg of mutton or the hat. It was alleged, however, that he used *snorters*, which was presumably an irregular deed, calculated to give him an undue advantage over other competitors. A *snorter* was a hollow ring, grooved and provided with teeth like a saw, wherewith to bite the wood of the slippery pole. By fixing these to the hands and feet it was far easier to climb up. A wagon was also placed by the old Pig Cross (in front of the *Blake Arms*, once the *Duke of Wellington*), with a pole put up at each end, connected by a slack horizontal rope. From this rope penny rolls were suspended, which had been dipped in treacle. The boys who were competitors in the elegant contest had their hands tied behind them, and were ranged in a row of, say, half a dozen in front of the roll-laden rope. In the competition the boy was the winner who first finished eating his roll, a difficult and sticky task. There was also jumping in sacks and athletic competitions of many kinds. A favourite event was the race provided for boys and girls, who started from the *Tynte Arms* up to the eastern end of St. Matthew's fields (at the top of West Street), and back again. Such were the Pig Cross revels of former days. There was an element of rough-

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ness about them, beyond doubt. And sometimes, of course, undesirable characters assembled at them, as was inevitable. But the constables were there, and there was always the fear of the old gaol in Fore Street. This solemn-looking building was adorned in front with a festoon of fetters or gyves, well calculated to strike terror into the hearts of evil doers. Four of the gaol-keepers are still remembered: Mr. Green, Mr. Gover, Mr. James Bussell, and Mr. Thomas Lear, who afterwards became superintendent of the police. Part of the old gaol wall is still standing, and can be seen behind Messrs. Bond's premises in Fore Street near the bridge.

The weekly markets were, too, important events in their way. With the stern exigencies of business were mingled the ulterior joys of chats at the inns, lengthy conversations, social amenities, and thrilling items of gossip. It was a joy to watch the coaches pass through, start, and stop; and to express the opinion that they were rapidly approaching perfection, that their speed could not ever be greatly increased, and that the trade in horses must inevitably develop enormously owing to the many demands of the coaches during, say, the next hundred years. When the railroads at length came in they were suspiciously sniffed at for a long time, partly because it was thought that there must be something diabolical within the mind which could make things run by themselves, and partly because it seemed so utterly wicked to depreciate the trade in coach-horses, which then had risen to its zenith and which promised so well. As the royal mail ran through

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the town, with old Bishop the guard on the top, wearing a red coat with yellow trimmings, and blowing a long horn, it was felt that Providence had done well in permitting the evolution of coaches and coaching, and that it seemed a pity to disturb so excellent a way.

How greatly things have changed since then, and what strange and unforeseen developments the railroads produced ! They upset the balance of things, it was felt; and so they did. In those days numbers of calves were brought into the town every year from Dorset, in the spring-time, for sale. They were located in front of where the police station now is. From their persistent and pathetic bleating they were known as the Dorsetshire band. But the custom came to an end soon after the railways were opened. Parsons wore wigs in church—and frequently out of it—then ; it was the proper thing to do. In 1820 it was laid down in the trust deed of a Nonconformist chapel that no minister who presumed to wear trousers should be permitted to officiate there. He must adhere to the comely orthodox knee-breeches of the period. Change in those times was feared and disliked more than it is now. With the increased possibility of travelling about the country, and of seeing new places, people, and customs, there came a change of habit in almost every relationship of life—recreations, amusements, public and private festivities, assumed new shapes. They assumed them, too, with a speed which was absolutely bewildering to the old, and which dazed minds which had grown accustomed to the quieter days of the Georges, when most people stayed at home.

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Considerably later on there was one spectacle, which, though it is not to be reckoned as an amusement, was an object of intense interest to the people. This was the entrance into the town of Brother Prince, from the Agapemone at Spaxton. He would drive in at times seated in an open carriage drawn by four horses with two postillions. Four blood hounds followed the carriage; four or six out-riders accompanied it. Sometimes he would stop where the Blake statue now stands, and there much speaking and exhortation took place. He was heralded, on some of his journeys, by an out-rider preceding the carriage, who would call out loudly at intervals, "Behold, he cometh!" There was in the minds of certain people, no doubt, some awe at this strange scene. To the majority it was only a pretty sight; to some it was even a ridiculous one. It is past history now, but in former days it was one of the things which appealed to the imagination of many a spectator, who wondered dimly what such things could mean.

As well as the public amusements, such as fairs and markets, in the joys of which all people could share, there were the elect and private entertainments confined to the public bodies and to certain circles of friends. The mayor's annual feast was a great event, conducted in considerable pomp and with laudable feats of eating and drinking. Great was the desire to be an invited guest, and the order of precedence was rigidly observed. The occasion was one of some importance politically, and in the eighteenth century great people, such as Lord Poulett, would attend in order, if possible, deftly to

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influence the voting by means of an after-dinner speech. George Bubb Dodington alludes to this in his diary. But later on the feelings grew so high that politics had to be tabooed at the mayor's hospitable board.

There was, within the last sixty years, more dining out than exists nowadays. Social hours and habits have changed. For a long time four o'clock was the fashionable hour for a dinner, then it got to five, and at length to six. This left a long evening for playing whist and for conversation, and, perhaps, for the consumption of port. Those who can remember those days aver, with probability, that conversation was studied then, and was practised almost as a fine art. A little tit-bit of news or a bon-mot was hoarded up all day until the guests gathered around the festive board in the evening. Evening newspapers and telegrams have gone far to destroy such habits as these. There was some hard drinking, no doubt. One gentleman well known at that day in Bridgwater society determined to advocate strict temperance, and to insist upon his guests observing it also. This was in the quite early years of the nineteenth century. He invited eleven guests to dinner (he lived in Castle Street) and said, "Gentlemen, we will abolish these drinking habits. Rigid temperance shall be our rule. You see on the sideboard all the wine you will have to-night." They looked, and saw twelve comely bottles of port, one to each man. Thus was temperance inaugurated at the doctor's dinner party. Such unheard-of abstinence then was rare, and the event was considered to be historical

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and exemplary, as well as Spartan-like in its rigid moderation, and almost cruel in its enforced self-denial.

Reading formed but a small part of recreation then. The French wars, the fate of Buonaparte, and politics absorbed most men's interests. Books were not very widely read, and they were not numerous. Of course there were a few students, but they were *rarae aves*. In the time of George the Fourth and William the Fourth there was no great stimulus to study or to read, and no inordinate desire for it. When Queen Victoria ascended the throne, however, the change in people's habits came. It came slowly to be realised that the cult of literature is one of the greatest and most abiding of human joys, and that as a recreative force it has probably no equal in the world.



## Bridgwater Amusements, 1794.

**ON THURSDAY** the Twenty-first of **AUGUST** next will be run for on Clifton Common, near Bridgwater, by any Horse, Mare, or Gelding, that never won the value of **TWENTY POUNDS**, at any one time, (matches excepted) and being (bona fide) the Property of Gentlemen resident in the County of Somerset, and that have been used as **HUNTERS**, or on the ROAD, this last Season, (of which proper Certificate must be produced), carrying twelve Stone, the best of three four mile Heats.

### A LARGE HANDSOME SILVER CUP,

of the real value of **TWENTY POUNDS**, given by the Gentlemen of the Town and Neighbourhood of **BRIDGWATER**.

### Also, a Saddle & Bridle

will be run for between the heats by Ponies that never won any thing.

**AND** on **FRIDAY** the Twenty-second of August next will be run for at the same place, by any Horse, Mare, or Gelding, that never won **FIFTY POUNDS** at any one time, weight for age, according to New Market Cup weights, the best of three four mile Heats.

### A LARGE HANDSOME SILVER CUP,

of the real value of **TWENTY POUNDS**, given by the Gentlemen of the Town and Neighbourhood of **TAUNTON**.

### Also, a Saddle and Bridle

will be run for between the Heats, by Hacks that never won any thing.

Each Horse &c. to pay Half-a-guinea entrance, or double at the Post.

A clear Heat each day for the Stake. Not less than three to start each Day.

Disputes to be determined by a majority of Members of One Guinea.

To Start each Day at four in the Afternoon.

The winner (each day) to pay five shillings for Weights and Scales.

The Horses to be shown and entered at the Crown Inn in Bridgwater, on Wednesday the 20th. of August next, between the hours of four and seven in the Afternoon, at which time the Gentlemen are requested to name the Rider, and the colour he is intended to ride in.

Public Breakfasts, Ball, Backsword playing (for a purse of Guinea) &c. as usual. Ordinary, Thursday at the Crown, and Friday at the George.

Dated July 19th. 1794.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE REFORM BILL OF 1832

THE calm of the eighteenth century in matters political, when we compare it with the nineteenth, was indeed remarkable. Of the earlier part of the former century it has been truly said that few influences, either literary or individual, were in evidence to affect the dominant ideas of the time. "The English people, waxing fat under a succession of good harvests and the rapid development of commercial enterprise, worried themselves very little about the game played by their governing classes. A growl at some tax upon drink, or at a pacific policy which hurt their national pride, or seemed to endanger their trade, was their only sign of life. Nothing could be further from the mind of the aristocracy than any real attempt to waken a sleeping democracy. The jargon about standing armies and annual parliaments was the most transparent of artifices. And meanwhile philosophers, growing ever more sceptical, were pretty clear that where nothing could be known it was better to make no change."<sup>1</sup>

The nineteenth century quickly saw a reaction from these ways of thinking and living. Most

<sup>1</sup> *English Thought in the eighteenth century*, Vol. II, p. 186.

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

notable of all, perhaps, was the rapidity with which English people, as soon as they had recovered from the fierce anxiety of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars, developed the desire to have considerable alteration made in the way in which the constituencies—especially in the towns—elected their Members of Parliament. The wish for reformation herein grew, and it could not be stayed. There was, of course, the fiercest opposition. “A mute but dogged resistance to all change was the natural policy of men in whom the spirit of absolute rule survived after its logical groundwork had dropped away. The sentiment, indeed, upon which George the Third relied was still vigorous; the selfish factiousness of the aristocracy gave strength to the ruler who at least professed to represent the national will.”

The idea and the details of the Reform Bill of 1831 are too well known to need long description. There were, beyond doubt, some serious evils existing. A certain number of Members were nominated by purely private individuals, their patrons. A seat in Parliament became the appanage of some great noble House, whose head nominated whom he would to represent the will of the free and untrammelled electors. Other seats were in the nomination of close corporations. Some places that once had been inhabited boroughs, but from which almost every vestige of dwelling-house and population had vanished, still returned their Members, or rather the Members were returned for them by some well-to-do magnate. Lord John Russell proposed, therefore, when he intro-

## THE REFORM BILL OF 1832

duced his first Reform Bill into the House of Commons on March 1st, 1831, to abolish such private nominations of Members, to disfranchise uninhabited boroughs, and to establish a new electoral scheme based upon the census of 1821. Any borough which possessed fewer than 2000 inhabitants was to lose its Member; all boroughs having a population of 4000 were in future to be represented by one Member only. The "fancy franchises" were to be abolished. For the boroughs, every householder paying rates on houses of the yearly value of ten pounds and upwards was to become the possessor of a vote. Nevertheless resident voters under the old qualifications were allowed to retain their privilege during life, but the privilege became extinct at their decease, and could not be enjoyed by their successor.

In the counties, copyholders to the value of ten pounds a year and leaseholders for not less than twenty-one years at an annual rent of fifty pounds or more were to have the franchise. Some of the seats vacated by the Bill were to be given to cities and towns then unrepresented. Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, Greenwich, Sheffield, Wolverhampton, and Sunderland were to have two Members each, instead of none. Eight additional Members were given to certain divisions of London, which had grown very rapidly in population. Some other anomalies were corrected, which are probably well known. One thing to be attempted was the diminished expense of elections, and also the cessation of bribery.

When the Bill came on in the Commons for its

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second reading it was carried, but by a majority of one vote only ! This made it clear that the measure could not survive the passage through the House of Lords, even if it were to succeed in running the gauntlet of the Commons in Committee. General Gascoigne, in a totally unpremeditated way, came at this juncture to the help of the much worried Whig Ministers. He proposed an amendment to the effect that it was not fitting, at such a time, to reduce the number of knights, citizens, and burgesses constituting the House of Commons, and his amendment was carried by eight votes. Now, this amendment was not in the least destructive of the principle of the Bill. Lord John Russell and the Government were not specially pledged to the reduction of the number of Members by reason of the suppression of certain constituencies, although in fact some such reduction was contemplated as a matter of convenience. But Lord Grey, in the Upper House, perceived his opportunity. He and the Cabinet saw clearly that they must have a bigger majority to support them in the Commons, if ever the Bill was to be passed. So they determined to accept the vote on General Gascoigne's amendment as a Government defeat, and to make an instant appeal to the constituencies to say whether there should be a Reform Act or no. Thus it came to pass that Bridgwater, amongst the other constituencies, was to be asked to help to decide the great question, and to return two Members to Parliament to represent the political wishes of the ancient Borough.

Mr. Pocock and Mr. Thornton (who was after-

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wards known as Mr. Astell, and was a man of substance) had sat for Bridgwater in the Parliaments of 1807, 1812, and 1818. In 1820 George the Third died, and the demise of the Crown (in those days) necessitated a new election. At this stage of political history a joining of forces had been effected between the old-fashioned Whigs and the Tories; and so Colonel Tynte was returned (in the place of Mr. Pocock), having Mr. Astell as his colleague. This combination lasted through the elections of 1826 and 1830. Colonel Tynte was a Whig, and he had incurred some local displeasure by voting for the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829. However, the coalition of forces lasted, and in 1831 Colonel Tynte and Mr. Astell were again returned for the town. Throughout England the contest was fought out with the intensest fury. "The amount of money spent on both sides was something astonishing even for those days of reckless expenditure in political contests. Neither side could make any boast of political purity, and indeed neither side seemed to have the slightest inclination to set up such a claim. The only rivalry was in the spending of money in unrestricted and shameless bribery and corruption. The ordinary man of the world felt that if he himself did not give the bribe his rival would be certain to give it, and that nobody in his club or in society would think any the worse of him because it was understood that he had bought himself into the House of Commons." At any rate the result in England, however attained, was decisive. King William opened the new Parliament on June 21st, 1831, and on July 7th the second reading

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of Lord John Russell's second Reform Bill was carried in the Commons by a majority of 136 votes. Something in the way of electoral reform, it was clear, was coming. In due time the third reading was passed, and then the wonder arose in the country as to what the Lords would do. It was known that the Duke of Wellington disapproved of the measure, and that he had a strong following. Soon the newspaper war in the provinces began to wax fast and furious. "We have heard," said a Bridgwater newspaper, "that there is really some ground for believing that the present government will be sufficiently desperate to attempt a very extensive increase of the peerage in order to carry the Reform Bill. Can it be possible that the wild excitement of ambition, or the vexing contemplation of anticipated defeat, should make them insensible to the fear of the consequences which might fall on their own heads? And if it were possible that two or three bold bad men of the cabinet should be so desperate as to attempt this wholesale manufacture of legislators, must we maintain so humiliating a position as that there are fifty or sixty commoners of respectable standing in society, who would submit to the disgrace of becoming a herd of titled slaves—of coronetted menials, to be driven into an assembly of which they would be the scorn and the derision, and to be ordered to say content or not content as their master should command? An attempt so outrageous would no longer leave us to *apprehend* a revolution, for we should be ipso facto in the midst of one."

After the third reading in the Commons the

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hubbub grew greater. A leading article in a Bridgewater paper on October 2nd, 1831, spoke thus: "The Mansion House meeting, it is proper to observe, was distinguished by the braying of that incomparable Ass, the Lord Mayor, and the presence of 70, out of 90, of the bankers in London. In Canterbury a dancing-master, two dissenting clergyman, and one Roman Catholic priest, advised the Lords on behalf of that ancient city. We can easily perceive how well qualified a *dancing-master* must be to teach the peers of parliament what *steps* they ought to take in the revolutionary reel; but the humility belonging to the profession of the other gentlemen does not seem to us to have been advantageously directed on this occasion."

A newspaper favourable to Reform published the following account of a meeting held in Bridgewater: "On Tuesday last the Political Union held their monthly meeting at the Seven Stars Inn, which was well attended. In the absence of our worthy Mayor, B. Lovibond, Esq. took the chair. Much pleasing information was advanced. It was proposed that a requisition be adopted and presented to J. Evered, Esq., Mayor, which was immediately drawn up and numerously signed, requesting him to convene a meeting for the purpose of the town and neighbourhood's petitioning the House of Lords to pass the present Reform Bill. The said requisition was next day presented to the Mayor by the Chairman and Society of the Union, with which he expressed his entire concurrence, and promised to call a meeting at an early day." This report is,

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obviously, mildness itself. Then the other side had its turn, as follows.

“The Mayor, who it seems was expected to have presided at the Union, appointed Wednesday, the 28th ult., for the Town Meeting. The members of the Political Union, we are informed, mustered in great force on the occasion, and were joined by a few respectable persons of the town and neighbourhood, some of whom we will name, because we believe they *must* have been entirely unacquainted with the real views and intentions of the requisitionists. These intentions, as avowed at the before mentioned meeting of the Political Union, extended to the adoption of measures with the other Unions of the Kingdom ‘to *force* the House of Lords, by a simultaneous movement, into compliance’ (these were the very words!) ‘if that House should *dare* to refuse the *demands* of the people.’ To effect this, it was proposed ‘that the Secretary and Council of the Union should be requested to open a correspondence with the different Unions of the Kingdom.’ This resolution was carried unanimously, after the great bulk of the poor men present had been worked up to a state bordering on frenzy, by a frothy declamation of nearly three-quarters of an hour: a declamation more violent in its invective against established institutions, more sweeping and seditious in its denunciations, and more recklessly wicked and ferocious in principle, than anything we have ever heard of in the annals of this kingdom; and only to be equalled by the ravings of a Danton, a Marat, or a Robespierre, in that sanctuary of murder, the Jacobin Club. . . .

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The enormity of the guilt, the finished perfection of the hypocrisy, completely exculpate those persons who unintentionally became its instruments. They are now undeceived. Should they again suffer themselves to be imposed upon, they would *then* be something worse than dupes. It would *then* be the bounden duty of every loyal subject to denounce them as the servile tools of vulgar and ferocious incendiaries."

On September 22nd the Bill was read in the House of Lords for the first time, and on the morning of the 8th of October came the division upon the second reading. Lord Wharncliffe moved that it be read a second time that day six months. The House divided, and 158 votes were recorded for the second reading, with 199 against it. Thus—for the moment at any rate—the Bill was defeated. Parliament was immediately prorogued, and the Reform Members scoured the country, speaking everywhere in no measured terms of the action which had been taken by the House of Lords.

The Bridgwater Tories, of course, were charmed at the turn affairs had taken, and their Press was loud in its praise of the Lords. "The Rule-of-Three Reform is at an end, and we are done with Whig governments in England for another half-century. After a debate unparalleled in the House of Peers, not only for duration, but for the stores of constitutional knowledge, forcible reasoning, and deliberate wisdom it called forth, the ministerial measure of Reform has been rejected by a majority even greater than the friends of freedom and good order had ever ventured to anticipate. Uninfluenced

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by the absurd pretensions and the flimsy fallacies of the interested advocates of the Bill, unintimidated by the stimulated fury of venal journalists or the idle threats of an intoxicated populace, the Lords have nobly done their duty. . . . That the Ministry will still attempt to cling to place, 'with desperate fidelity,' is not improbable: it is even said that they have been for some time prepared with their plan of subsequent operations, which was to prorogue till November, create another batch of Peers in the interim, and then bring in a somewhat less wild and monstrous scheme of reform. But this will not serve their turn; the King and the country are utterly sick of their blundering rashness, as well as their inexperience of business, and will have nothing more to do with them. In vain will they any longer try to pour

Into the porches of the Royal ear,  
Their lep'rous distilment;

avenging justice is pressing upon them with no halting steps; the Whigs are a lost people!" The Whigs, however, as it proved, were by no means lost. The year 1831 was indeed a sad year to the Tories. A year—as they summed it up—"of sham reform, of real sedition; of comic statesmanship, of tragic outrage; of increased expenditure, of diminished revenue; of Lord Grey and of cholera; of Lord Brougham and of humbug." The newspaper poet of the Bridgwater Tories thus gave vent to his feelings in the early days of December, 1831.

We must count it a sad curse if than thirty-one a worse,  
For body, soul, or purse, we ever have to rue.  
But in hopes that times will mend, and our scrapes will  
have an end,

We shall welcome as a friend the New Year thirty-two.

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In that year we trust and pray, that banished far away  
May be the tribe of Grey—Earl Grizzle and his crew ;  
And that the Tories stout (much improved for being out)  
Will put the rogues to rout in the year thirty-two.

Meanwhile there had been terrible riots in Bristol, and in some other places, in consequence of a possibility that the Reform Bill might not pass. In Bristol there was loss of life and considerable destruction of property. Sir Charles Wetherall, the Recorder and Member for that city, had vigorously opposed the Bill, and the house in which he was supposed to be was attacked and almost demolished. The military were called out to suppress the storm, and several of the ring-leaders amongst the rioters were ultimately sentenced to death.

Lord Grey, as the leader in the Reform movement, was now violently attacked by the Tory press. A Bridgwater paper of November 7th, 1831, did not spare him.

The writer of the leading article asks, "How shall I describe the evils which now afflict us? The dwellings of nobles in the country, and private citizens in the town, burned by savage mobs—the gaols broken open, and felons let loose upon the country—robbery and murder, and violation, in the open day ; and everywhere a fearful looking-forward to calamity. This, my Lord, is the state of the country under your government, and should a time of tranquillity again arrive, and your Lordship survive to see it, I trust that indignant justice will make you answer for the miseries which your rashness and folly in the government have brought

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about. You have served your own family, but you have ruined Great Britain. You have caught up the intemperate follies of your youth, and engrafted them upon the obstinacy of your old age. You have been willing to sacrifice the security of the constitution to your vanity and your ambition as a popular reformer; the ruins of that constitution are likely to be the mournful evidence of your rashness and imbecility. For my part it will be some satisfaction to me, as I think it will be to the whole country, if, amid the general decay, enough of the power of law and justice shall remain to punish you as you deserve, and leave your name as a memorable example not only of the calamities which a foolish and obtinate statesman may bring upon a nation, but the retribution which a suffering nation will demand for deeds done by one whose station gives to his folly all the evil consequences of crime." Poor Lord Grey! He was used to abuse, no doubt. The political writers of that time were emphatic indeed in their condemnation, and the Bridgwater writers were well able to contribute their quota with the rest.

In November, as riots had taken place in several of the neighbouring towns, it was thought necessary to take measures for preserving the peace in Bridgwater. One hundred and seventeen men were appointed and sworn in as Special Constables, an action which was highly commended by Lord Melbourne, to whom the incident was reported. Mr. John Evered, however, the ex-Mayor, got a terrible wiggling over the matter. It seems that a meeting of the Political Council was held, and

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a statement was issued, saying : "Whereas some apprehensions, *which we confidently believe are erroneous and groundless*, have been expressed as to the tranquillity of this town, we impress upon members of the Union, and on all classes, the necessity of using their most strenuous exertions for the preservation of the peace," and so on. This was signed, John Evered, Chairman.

The Tory journal waxed furious at this. It grew indignant "at the wicked efforts of those incendiaries who insidiously labour to bring the constituted authorities into contempt." "But," it added, "to plot under the pretence of assisting in the preservation of good order is an infamous atrocity adding hypocrisy to crime ! Yet such is the degrading spectacle which is exhibited in this town, by the ring-leaders of a conspiracy called the Political Union !"

About this time appeared the following lines, headed (in a local newspaper) "The tribulation of (Lord John) Russell." It was directed "to be sung to a popular air, with a sobbing Accompaniment."

'Tis all my fancy painted it,  
'Tis lovely, 'tis divine,  
But the Lords will ne'er consent to it,  
It never can be mine :  
Yet toiled I as man never toiled,  
And I am toiling still,  
Oh my heart, my heart is quaking  
For the Whig Reform Bill.

Its schedules of disfranchisement  
Are down in black and white,  
They took old John Smith's breath away  
With wonder and delight.

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Those schedules are not yet the law,  
I fear they never will,  
Oh my heart, my heart is quaking  
For the Whig Reform Bill.

I've borne Sir Charles'<sup>1</sup> sarcastic pen,  
I've felt keen Croker's<sup>2</sup> blast,  
But my penance now is almost done,  
The Bill is near its last.  
And when it's kicked out by the Lords  
Let tears each Whig eye fill,  
For they must go along with it,  
The poor Reform Bill ;  
Oh the Whigs must march along with it,  
The poor Reform Bill !

In spite, however, of journalistic rhyming, and the fulminations of those whose hope it was to sweep the Reform Bill off the face of the earth, the movement was quickly gaining such force that it could not be stayed. Parliament was summoned to meet in December, and the speech from the throne recommended to both Houses, in clear terms, the duty of passing a measure of reform. "A speedy and satisfactory settlement of this question becomes daily of more pressing importance to the security of the State, and to the contentment and welfare of my people," the Sovereign was made to say. The King, indeed, whatever may once have been his feelings as to Lord Grey's Bill, now saw clearly that even if he gave his strenuous support to the Lords in their opposition to it, he might endanger, possibly, the House of Lords itself, and he might even shake the stability of his

<sup>1</sup> Sir Charles Wetherall, who opposed the Bill.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Croker, an impassioned speaker on the Tory side.

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throne. The monarchy in France had already been shaken; the monarchy in England must at all cost be kept safe and sure.

In December, therefore, Lord John Russell brought in to the House of Commons his third Reform Bill. It was in substance very similar to the two previous Bills, and, like its predecessor, it passed quickly through its three stages in the Lower House. Then, on March 27th, 1832, came the beginning of a most thrilling period. On that day Lord Grey introduced the Bill into the House of Peers. The first reading, of course, was purely formal. On April 14th it came on for the second reading: 184 peers voted for it and 175 against it. This gave a majority of nine votes in favour of the Bill. But this was an utterly inadequate majority. The Government saw at a glance that unless there was to be some complete change of conditions the Bill could never run the gauntlet of the Committee stage in the Lords' House. This intuition of Lord Grey's turned out to be entirely true. The Committee stage came on, and Lord Lyndhurst moved an amendment providing that enfranchisement should precede any action of disfranchisement. This proposition, again, bore upon its face the sign of innocence. Yet it was not innocent, it was brilliantly ingenious, for it gave the Lords an opportunity, if carried, of turning the Bill inside out in Committee. A Tory majority might pass *a* Bill, but not *the* Bill. Lyndhurst argued and spoke most ably and convincingly, and his great rival Lord Brougham thundered, in his majestic way, on the other side. It was a splendid contest between

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two great men ; their speeches are well worth reading again to-day. Lyndhurst won. When the division came to be taken on May 7th, 151 Peers voted for the amendment, 116 against it. There was a majority of 35 against the Government. It seemed as if the Whigs *could* not get their measure passed. Lord Lyndhurst's successful amendment utterly blocked the way, and it brought about a more serious crisis than any that had arisen before.

Would the King consent to the creation of a batch of Whig Peers sufficient in number to carry the Bill? That was the question. Of course the Lords, at this period, were implored by the Tories never to yield to Grey and Russell. The following lines were laid before the Bridgwater readers in a newspaper of that day.

O come and vote for me,  
My Lord—and if you will,  
Your place it soon may be  
On a scaffold at Tower Hill.  
At Tower Hill, Tower Hill,  
For there ends the Reform Bill.

Another batch of Peers  
The premier shall provide,  
And coronets cover ears  
The owners fain would hide  
When Tower Hill, Tower Hill,  
Shall ring with shouts, Reform Bill !

Then come and join the Whigs,  
Give, give your silly vote ;  
Behave like swimming pigs,  
And cut your own throat,  
At Tower Hill, Tower Hill,  
For there ends the Reform Bill.



INTERIOR OF ST. MARY'S CHURCH, 1834

*Facing page 216*



## THE REFORM BILL OF 1832

At the election of Churchwardens for St. Mary's in April, 1832, a very violent scene occurred. Political feeling ran very high. "When the polling commenced, a scene ensued which defies description. The table was surrounded by the choicest blackguards and bullies of the Union; by wretches whose poor rates had been in arrears for twelve months, and who appeared to have been placed there to insult and maltreat those rate-payers that would not submit to the dictation of their Worship the Mob Orators. Several gross assaults were committed. Females were insulted in the most dastardly manner, and the roof of the House of God rang with hissing and hurrahs, with yells and horrible blasphemies, as the Mob happened to be pleased or displeased with the vote given. Amid such dreadful scenes the poll was closed with a majority of fifteen against those who so long and so steadily opposed themselves to the violence and blasphemy of a deluded and infuriated mob." This deplorable scene took place in the Church. The Vestry at that time occupied the extreme eastern part of the chancel.

Meanwhile not only all Bridgwater, but all England was in a terrible state of excitement and consternation. Lord Grey and his colleagues, in despair at the position, tendered their resignations to the King. William the Fourth instantly sent for the Duke of Wellington, hoping thus to escape from the Whigs. But the old Duke, who had fulminated against the Reform Bill in the Upper House, yet who was shrewd enough to see that something must be passed in order to satisfy the nation, suggested that

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Sir Robert Peel should be asked to form a Ministry, which he would support. Peel, a far-seeing man, wisely demurred. He pointed out to his Sovereign that no Administration but a Reform Administration could stand. He therefore advised his Majesty to send again for Lord Grey and Lord John Russell, and reinstate them not only in power and office, but also support them with the fullest assistance which the throne could give. The King had to yield, perhaps unwillingly, and certainly tardily. The Whigs came back again; and William consented to appoint as many Whig Peers as might be needed to pass the Bill. It never became necessary to create any Peers, for the Lords gave way. The Reform Bill passed its third reading in the Lords on June 4th, 1832, and three days later the King gave the royal assent. The crisis was over. It was an entire and complete triumph for the Whigs.

There was—it was inevitable—a prolonged wail from the other political party. "The revolution," said a Bridgwater journal on June 11th, "has at last been impressed with the Royal stamp, and the blood-hounds, who as yet have only tasted the dainties set before them, are eager and panting for more substantial food. The blood of numberless victims is required to gorge their voracious maws, and punishment—punishment—must be inflicted on those who have opposed their course, before they will be satisfied." The Editor proceeds. "Heaven be praised," he writes, "that we have done our duty!" Indeed the poor man had, for if violent invective and persistent vituperation could have killed either the Reform Bill or its supporters,

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assuredly both they and it would long ere then have ceased to be.

A banquet held at the Guildhall in commemoration of the passing of the Bill was thus alluded to by a Bridgwater writer.

Goddess of Humbug, from on high behold us,

While thus we dedicate to thee our lays :

Long in thy cause has principle enrolled us,

Here to thy name a monument we raise.

Thus then combining,

Heart and voice joining,

Sing we in harmony to Humbug's praise.

Here every silly sentiment inspiring,

Strike, strike the *liar*, and wake the festive lay :

Unionists of England, swell the foolish chorus ;

Raise a stale stave to Russell, Althorp, Grey.

Thus then combining,

Heart and voice joining,

Joyful we fuddle on this happy day.

Very poor stuff all this rhyming was, but it served its purpose, and it afforded a harmless vent for the excited feelings of that exciting time. Editorial language was apt to be violent then. When a Tory editor wrote of the "time-serving creatures of an imbecile Ministry," he only intended gently to refer to his Majesty's ministers who were guiding the fortunes of the Government. When he said, a little further down the page of the same local newspaper, that the Ministry "had abandoned not only all political virtue, but even all show of decent respect for political consistency and public honesty," he only wished to assure his readers that he did not share the political opinion of those who were in power. The Whigs were just as violent as

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their opponents, and equally vituperative. It was the bad fashion of the day. It was considered to be a political necessity for each side to vilify the other, if the populace were to be convinced.

In one respect the Reform Bill was an utter failure. It was framed, its authors hoped, so as to discourage bribery and corruption. But these evil growths spread abroad and increased joyfully. Each party claimed to be on the side of electoral purity: neither side had the faintest right to such an assumed virtue, for neither side possessed it. Bridgwater—like many other towns—bribed and was bribed; happily, persistently, continuously. The day of reckoning came anon, and, as frequently happens in our tangled skein of life, it came too late.

## CHAPTER XIV

### CHILTON TRINITY

CLOSELY adjacent to Bridgwater, away towards the winding stream of the River Parret as it wends its way to the Severn Sea, lies the little village of Chilton. Now-a-days it has small title to fame or to recognition save its antiquity, and the interest of its ancient history. In the old days, when the villages were not, as now, eclipsed by the towns, but were friendly rivals to them, Chilton had some importance of its own. It was a Hundred of itself, known as the Hundred *Chilton Trinitatis*, from the dedication of its small yet beautiful parish church.

From before the days of Edward the Confessor—and it may well be, long before then—the tiny village has preserved its personality and its existence. The quiet pasture and corn lands have provided employment and sustenance for the population, whose lives were assuredly set in peaceful surroundings, and whose sober wishes, one may well believe, never learned to roam. We hear many times, in the days after Domesday, of the Chilton family, who owned the place, with many other manors. There were Sir Johns and Sir Robert and Sir Thomas de Chilton, a great and flourishing family, who reigned there. Later on the property passed into the possession of

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the family of de Wigbere or Wigborough, who took their name, it is said, from their manor of Wigborough near South Petherton. In the year 1327 Richard de Wigbere is recorded to have held the manors of Chilton, Huntstile, and Wigbere of the King in chief by the service of being door-keeper to the King's chamber, and by the rent of forty shillings a year. It is not the purpose of this brief sketch to relate the story of the other manors connected with Chilton, or to refer to the chapels of Huntstile and Idstock, which many centuries ago were annexed to Chilton Church. All this is past history, and belongs to mediæval times.

The earliest Rector of Chilton Trinity whose name is known was one Richard de Sancto Claro, who was appointed to the benefice in the year 1309, the patron being William de Wykebere, a member of the powerful family mentioned above. Richard was succeeded in 1323 by Simon de Ellesworth, and then follows a change in the patronage. For by this time the Augustinian Canons of St. John in Bridgwater had risen to some prominence, and several benefices had been allotted to their Religious House. Among these, of course, was St. Mary's, Bridgwater, and now Chilton Trinity Church was added to the list. From the year 1340 to 1529 the Master and Brethren of St. John's Religious House in Bridgwater appointed their *vicarius* to serve Chilton parish, and the patronage remained in their possession until the time of the dissolution of the monasteries, when it reverted to Queen Elizabeth. Since then it has continued to be vested in the Crown. Curiously enough, Queen Elizabeth herself ap-

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pointed no fewer than five Rectors of Chilton, the last of whom, one Richard Powell, lived on until the seventh year of the reign of James the First.

From very remote times there had been close connection between Bridgwater and Chilton. Some of the early Chantry Priests of St. Mary's were promoted to the rectory. The Church itself was always said to have been a daughter church to Horsey, now on the other side of the river, and such traditions are usually not without valid foundation. Thus it is probable that the priests of Bridgwater, Horsey, Idstock, Huntstile, and Chilton were in constant communication with each other, and that they frequently visited each other's domains. Within Chilton Church, in the fourteenth century, there were lights and images to St. Mary and to St. Katherine, and in a will dated 1530, John Myllor bequeathed for the *sustentationem luminis* of Blessed Mary of Idstock, one cow. Idstock is there described as *Capella de Chilton*. When the dissolution of the Religious Houses of England came at the middle of the sixteenth century, and when St. Mary's, Bridgwater, was stripped of almost all its property, Chilton Trinity escaped the great spoliation. The Church possessions were retained by that Church, and a considerable proportion of them remain in Church hands to-day.

By the time, however, that the eighteenth century had set in, a new current of ideas as to the Church, Nonconformity, Religion, Religious toleration, and all kindred matters was flowing fast. Queen Anne was a determined opponent of Roman Catholic views, and was a staunch adherent of the

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which he held until 1742, when the Rev. John Coles, a man of considerable force of character, followed him in the Vicariate of Bridgwater Town. Thus, before his time, three Vicars of Bridgwater had also held Chilton, and Mr. Coles, no doubt, served the two cures from the first.

Henceforth the two benefices were united, and a document dated February 15th, 1749, is of some interest as bearing upon the habits and customs of the time, and in other ways. It is signed by *Edward Bath and Wells*. This was Bishop Edward Willis, who held the Bishopric from 1743 to 1773. It was signed "at our house in James Street, Westminster." A petition, the document shows, had been presented in the previous December by the Rev. John Coles, pointing out the desirability of permanently uniting the two parishes. Although previous Vicars had held both positions, the appointments to them had always been made separately. Chilton parish, it was averred, "is small, consisting of not more than fourteen families, four of which only attend the parish Church, the rest living in hamlets intermixed with other parishes at so great a distance that they usually resort to other Churches." Of Bridgwater it was said that "the town and parish are very populous and extensive, and the duty very great." Of course there was then only one Church, St. Mary's. Before this time an Afternoon Preacher had been appointed for St. Mary's, so that the absence of the Vicar "is supplied by him when Divine Service is performed at Chilton, which of late years has been every other Sunday in the afternoon; heretofore but once a month."



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Chilton parish had apparently fared badly as regards its ministrations since 1678, in William Aleyn's time. Probably the Bishop had insisted upon the appointment of an Afternoon Preacher for Bridgwater, so as to set the Vicar free for the Chilton service.

In response to the petition, his Majesty, with the advice of the Right Honourable Philip Lord Hardwicke, Lord Chancellor, thereupon agreed to the union of Bridgwater with Chilton, stipulating that the right of advowson and patronage should remain in the possession of the Sovereign and his successors. There it remains unto this day.

Not many events since then have stirred the pulse of Chilton Trinity. The River Parret altered its course long ago, leaving on what is now the opposite side of its stream a considerable part of the parish which once was on the Chilton side. Few parishes in England have more puzzling or complicated boundaries. There was once a Rectory House. There is none now. Much of the Church land has been alienated too.

In 1728 a writer described Chilton Church as being "a neat structure, covered with lead." The lead is now nowhere to be seen. There was also an endowment in land, given by Edward Colston, for a charity school. This, too, has now passed out of mind and memory.

Thus the two old neighbours, Lord Briwere's flourishing town and John de Chilton's little village, are friends and neighbours still. Nine centuries of experience and of contiguity have not severed them, although scarce one thing to-day is as it was when

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Domesday Book was written. The kindly Parret washes the banks of both parishes, and even it, too, as we have seen, has changed its way. But the bells of Chilton Tower and of Bridgwater steeple ring out to each other across the green lands that lie between, telling, we will hope, a mutual message of love and goodwill that will not have passed away ere nine centuries more roll on their chequered course.

## CHAPTER XV

### DISFRANCHISEMENT

**K**EEN disappointment frequently lies behind the most promising Acts of Parliament. The Reform Bill of 1832 was hailed by thousands of English people as being for them a second *Magna Charta*. It was intended to destroy—as it did—certain glaring anomalies as to the nomination of Members at the sole whim of certain powerful individuals, and also to curb the parallel power of nomination by close corporations. But it was hoped that the Act would effect far greater things. It was devised to restrict “the enormous expense of elections, which was principally caused by the open bribery and corruption which had almost become a recognised accompaniment of every contest.” Such was Lord John Russell’s ideal.

But the statesman had left out of his calculation one very strong element in the nature of men, at least, let us say, of Englishmen. Half-a-million new voters were added to the electorate. The time over which an election could be spread was reduced, proportionately to the size of the constituency. This, it was hoped, would reduce the costs of elections. But, in English elections, the idea prevailed that every voter possessed, in his vote, a tangible

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and marketable asset. The new electors felt this just as much as did the older electorate. The Candidate, it was assumed, desired above all things to become a Member of Parliament. The electors possessed the power of making him, or not making him, a Member. Therefore, in order to induce the constituents to elect him, the Candidate was frequently willing to pay handsomely for their support, i.e., to bribe them. The presence of several Candidates not only added to the joy and bustle of the contest, it also tended to enhance the value of votes. What one Candidate would not give, another might. Of course there were always honourable and upright men who could never be bribed, and who looked upon their vote as a sacred trust inherent in their citizenship. There were such in Bridgwater, and in all electoral districts.

Yet it would be an affectation to assume that this high ideal ruled the minds of most English electors. It did not. The theory that an eager and grateful mass of citizens, resident within a certain area, desired to send to Parliament a man who would represent their deeply-cherished convictions as to the policy of government, and as to remedial legislation which should make England a happier and better land, was not carried out in fact. Indeed, it could not be. In 1832 the number of people who could read was very limited, and the number who, having read their newspaper, were competent to advise upon the nation's policy, was very small. An increased franchise was probably necessary. The increase, however, did not greatly raise the proportion of what may be called competent voters. The

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ideals of many and many a one, it is to be feared, might have been squeezed within the dimensions of a quart pot.

From very early days the proceedings in Bridgewater at election times were of the most lively description, rising at intervals to uproarious outbursts. Nomination-day was a huge holiday, when men shouted themselves hoarse in favour of their own Candidate, and in opposition to his opponent. Free fights occurred; they were a recognised part of the programme. Any *ruse*, trick, or practical joke which one side could play upon the other was freely and faithfully made use of. Voters were kept cooped up in public-houses, made drunk, and thus prevented from polling by the side whose interest it was that they should not poll. Other voters flatly refused to go to the poll at all unless a certain sum was paid to them, rising in amount as the close of the poll drew nigh. Many an election was thus turned in the last polling hour by a set of reprobate men who openly demanded to be bribed, and who not infrequently had received sums of money from both political parties. A strict count was kept of the state of the poll from hour to hour, and as the end drew near votes went up rapidly in price. The Balance men, as they were called, held the election in their own hands, and the longest purse determined the issue. If a really perfect Candidate had appeared in the town, an embodiment of all the virtues—social, political, and parliamentary—it would have been looked upon by many as a dire calamity if no contest should ensue. Perfect Candidates were not wanted, but such as were of the deep-pocketed, free-handed,

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and long-suffering tribe of men, such as would spring an extra £500 at a critical moment, and keep alive the beautiful traditions of those days.

Innumerable stories are afloat as to the ways of old Bridgwater electors, and they are probably better known to the readers of this book than they are to the writer. There is, or was, a keen delight in those rough-and-tumble times. They contributed, no doubt, to the joys of men, in a certain way. There was generally a good-natured disposition on every man's part to accept any trick or dodge of any friend who might chance to be on the opposing side. The ingenuity of man was racked to outwit the enemy. It was looked upon as a fair and stand-up fight, hampered by almost no restrictions. "How can we get our man in?" That was the question. "How can we get hold of voters from the other side?" If money could not do it—as it generally could and did—then skill and artifice and plot and plan must be used. Pleasant gifts of "samples of tea," or rolls of money, were in vogue; "cartridges," or seductive bundles of sovereigns; beer and spirits *ad lib.* and *usque ad nauseam*. Agents of splendid skill were employed to distribute the money; a charming man seated in a darkened room handed purses to the astonished and upright recipients. Such a mysterious stranger, locally known as the Man in the Moon, held festival at one of the Inns, and was exceedingly generous to the free and uncorrupt voters of the Ancient Borough. They were merry days, as men say. Undoubtedly they were, but their merriment had its limit. Bribery came at last to rage too furiously. Every dog, it is alleged, has his day. But his day,

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however long and merry, comes at last to an end. *Après moi le déluge*, said Louis the Fourteenth. Some of the Bridgwater electors of those times might have said the same.

In so old a Borough as Bridgwater the electorate has naturally passed through many changes and developments. In 1816 the right of voting was vested in the inhabitants paying scot and lot. But previously, in 1768, the capital burgesses had tried to prevent the scot and lot voters from polling, claiming that privilege as their own sole right. This claim was rejected by Parliament, who decided that those who lived in the eastern and western divisions of the town could not vote, but that the payers of scot and lot within the limits of the Borough proper could do so. This decision involved, naturally, a very limited number of people then qualified to vote. The Reform Bill, of course, enlarged the electorate, and subsequent legislation, with the extension also of the Borough, again added considerably to the number of voters.

From quite early days petitions against the valid and legal return of Members to Parliament, representing Bridgwater, were made to the House of Commons. This happened at the end of the seventeenth century, in 1781, in 1803, and in 1808. Petitions, however, a hundred years ago were far less formidable weapons than they are to-day. The scrutiny was less rigorous; the consequences were presumably less severe; the matter dropped more speedily out of sight. In a word, the Press at that time reached but a small proportion of the people. The Schoolmaster was not yet abroad.

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After the passing of the Reform Act thirteen elections for the Borough were carried through. Only four petitions, however, were made during that long period of time (1832 to 1868), and only two of these were brought to trial. These were in 1865 and 1868, and both petitions resulted in the unseating of the Members whose seats were thus challenged.

"So far as we have been able to gather any specific information," said the three Commissioners at the famous Inquiry of 1869, "touching the several elections which have come under our review, we see no reason to withhold our concurrence in the opinion expressed by every witness who has spoken as to the comparative state of morality in Bridgwater at the different periods in question. It has never varied. Whether in the old times, when the areas of place and population were narrow, . . . and the constituency small; or at the present time when all these conditions appear to have been extended to the uttermost; or in the intervening period; the proportion of local corruption has been always the same. It is always three-fourths, at least, of the actual constituency who are said to be hopelessly addicted to the taking or seeking of bribes, and who shew by their conduct that the imputation is well deserved: whilst, of the remainder, a very large part, perhaps by far the largest, are addicted to the giving or offering or negotiating of bribes. Rank and station appear to make no difference. Neither do we find that the needy are more corrupt than the well-to-do, nor the latter less prone to corruption." This, indeed, constituted a very stern rebuke.

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But it is necessary to go back a little in order to discover what forces were at work which in Bridgewater eventually culminated in the disaster of 1869. They were numerous ; they were complicated ; and some of them need not be referred to at all. In 1837 a bye-election took place to fill the seat vacated by Mr. Leader, who had resigned. Mr. Broadwood was the Conservative Candidate, and Mr. Richard Brinsley Sheridan represented the Liberal cause. After a terrific contest Mr. Broadwood won by fifty-eight votes. "There is no doubt whatever that corrupt practices very largely prevailed at that election," said the Commissioners in their report. On the 23rd of May Mr. Broadwood's return was petitioned against, and no defence was set up. Whatever might have happened was obliterated by the demise of the Crown, William IV dying on June 20th, thus, according to the practice of that day, rendering necessary a general election.

At this election, which was held on July 26th, 1837, Mr. Broadwood and Mr. Courtenay, Conservatives, were elected, the Liberal Candidates, Mr. Sheridan and Sir T. B. Lethbridge, receiving but seven votes between them. Again a petition was sent up, but nothing came of it. The matter dropped out, and nothing was done. In 1841, at the next election, Mr. Broadwood and Mr. Forman were returned, and "much money was spent in the contest by both sides." In 1847 three Candidates offered themselves : Mr. C. J. K. Tynte and Mr. Serjeant Gazelee, Liberals, and Mr. Broadwood as a Conservative. Messrs. Tynte and Broadwood were returned. "The bribing," says the report,

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“was extensive as of old, and upon the accustomed scale.” Both Members, however, retained their seats, since no petition was laid. In 1852 there were five Candidates, three Liberals and two Conservatives; and Mr. Tynte and Mr. Follett (one for each party) were elected. At the elections of 1857 and 1859 Mr. Tynte and Mr. Alexander William Kinglake were returned. Of the former of these two elections the report says that “no petition was presented against the return, although there would have been no difficulty whatever in setting it aside.” Of the latter it is recorded that a petition was lodged against the return on the ground of bribery, but “was withdrawn at an early stage.”

Then followed the events of 1865. Mr. Tynte had announced his intention of not again becoming a Candidate, and his party was represented in the contest by Mr. Kinglake, the sitting Member, and Sir John Shelley. Mr. Westropp, a Conservative who had been defeated at the election of 1859, again came forward. Sir John Shelley, it is said, exacted a solemn pledge from a very active individual in the town that there should be no expenses which were illegal, yet during his canvass “he constantly met with the reply from voters that they should vote for ‘Mr. Most.’” Mr. Westropp and Mr. Kinglake were elected. A petition was promptly presented against the former for bribery and other corrupt practices, and a cross petition was also lodged demurring to Mr. Kinglake’s retention of his seat. Mr. Westropp was unseated, and Mr. Kinglake retained his position. This voidance led to yet another election, when Mr. Patton, formerly

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Solicitor-General for Scotland, defeated Mr. Walter Bagehot, a Conservative, by seven votes. However, in June, 1866, Mr. Patton was made Lord Advocate for Scotland, which office necessitated his seeking re-election by his constituents. He did so, being opposed by Mr. Philip Vanderbyl, who gained the seat, as the report announced, "by the most unblushing bribery," by thirty-six votes. Thus, from 1866 to 1868, the Borough was represented in Parliament by Mr. Kinglake and Mr. Vanderbyl. In 1868 a general election came.

This, the last election ever held for the Borough of Bridgwater, was a notable one in every way, and it is rather humiliating to read over the story of what transpired thereat. Mr. Westropp and Mr. Gray, a London merchant, stood for the Conservatives; Mr. Kinglake and Mr. Vanderbyl for the Liberals. Both the Liberal Candidates were elected; Mr. Gray was at the bottom of the poll. "Shortly after the election a petition was threatened on behalf of the Conservatives," the Commissioners said in their Report, "and every conceivable means was adopted by the Liberal solicitors either to suppress it altogether or compromise it at whatever cost." But this was, presumably, found to be impossible.

Mr. Justice Blackburn opened his Court at the Town Hall, Bridgwater, on the 23rd of February, 1869, and the trial lasted four days. Its result was a foregone conclusion. "Counsel were perfectly well advised," said the Judge at the conclusion, "when they advised their clients that the *primâ facie* case of which evidence had been given, could not be rebutted or overset, and, consequently, that the seat

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was lost." Thus both Members were unseated. But worse than that lay behind. "I must report to the House," continued the Judge, "that in my opinion corrupt practices have extensively prevailed in the borough at the last election. What the House of Commons may do upon that, it will be for the House to consider." Thus the two Liberal Members ceased to be Members ; they were the last of their race, for the Borough. The Judge had spoken out his mind ; it remained for the House of Commons to take up the case, or to let it lie.

Mr. Justice Blackburn made his report to the Speaker on the 26th of February, 1869. It was of such a nature that the House was bound to take action upon it. This was done. A Bribery Commission was appointed to go into the whole proceedings of the last Bridgwater election, and of the entire range of electoral practices within the town. Mr. Edwin Plumer Price, q.c., Mr. Thomas Chisholm Anstey, and Mr. Charles Edward Coleridge were sent down as Commissioners. They opened their inquiry at the Town Hall on the 23rd of August, 1869. One of the sentences in the preliminary statement made by the Chief Commissioner must have struck terror into the hearts of some Bridgwater men. "We have power," he said, "to summon before us all persons whom we may believe can give any information to us respecting corrupt practices and the mode in which elections have been conducted in this borough. We have the same power of punishing for contempt of court, for refusal to give evidence, which any of Her Majesty's Superior Courts have."

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Then the long story was opened out, and the past history was dug up. The Commissioners sat in judgment for forty-seven days, and the evidence which was taken before them fills over eleven hundred large pages of printed matter. The revelations can only be described as being terrible. No one knew whose turn might come next. No one who had even dabbled in political corruption could feel safe. Those—and there were some—who had wallowed in it and profited by it and made a science of its theory and practice, must have cowered under the long-drawn-out agony of those forty-seven days. It is impossible to record the proceedings of that Commission. A veil must be drawn over it, and the veil had better not be lifted. Some reputations were tarnished, some surprises were revealed, and many men were saddened. So far as regards uprightness and moral force and integrity of public life, it was the saddest epoch in all the history of Bridgwater. It was a sadder time than when the Castle was stormed, and the town besieged. These might be built up again, but the fabric which the Commission shattered could never be rebuilt.

“We find,” the Commissioners reported to her Majesty in their long official document dated the 20th of December, 1869, “that corrupt practices have extensively prevailed at the last election and at every preceding election for the Borough of Bridgwater into which we have inquired, up to and inclusive of the earliest in date, that is to say, the general election of the 30th April to 3rd May 1831.” It was a startling and a terrible disclosure, and it can rarely have been paralleled, one would imagine, in

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the history of Election Commissions. It sealed the Parliamentary fate of the Borough, which was disfranchised for its evil doings, and thus the long roll of its Members of Parliament came to an end. Johannes de la Weye was the first, in 1295. For five hundred and seventy-four years the town had been represented in the Great Council of the nation. Now it was all ended. Bridgwater gave its name, afterwards, to a County Division, and that is the only remaining relic of its enfranchised days.

The stories still current in the town of the fun and frolic which took place at the old election times; the drinking, the practical joking, the boisterous mirth and the riotous excitement, are numerous enough. The heavy bribes which then were current, the money which wily voters could extort from too willing Candidates—or the agents of Candidates—with ease, the whole rollicking irresponsibility of the period, strike the thoughtful mind with a curious sense of unfitness and of humiliation. When voters treat an election as a huge revel, and clever men connected with its conduct look upon it as a means of self-aggrandisement, it is infinitely sad. Those who fostered such methods, or even assented to them, now prove to have been the enemies of their town. When the fun and the drinking and the bribery are over, men have to sit down and count the cost. Bridgwater is now paying the bill of those unwise ones who ran up the long score, and the price is, Disfranchisement. And unhappily the debt is one which cannot be completely paid.

Bridgwater was by no means singular in her electoral methods. Many other Boroughs were every

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whit as bad. But they somehow slipped through the meshes of the net which captured our ancient town. In 1685 we kept our charter, although we took Monmouth's side, while a neighbouring town which got into trouble lost its charter for some scores of years. But in 1869 the turn of the wheel came. We lost our Representation in the House of Commons, while our neighbours—who were of like passions with ourselves—got off scot free.

## CHAPTER XVI

### RELIGIOUS EXPANSION

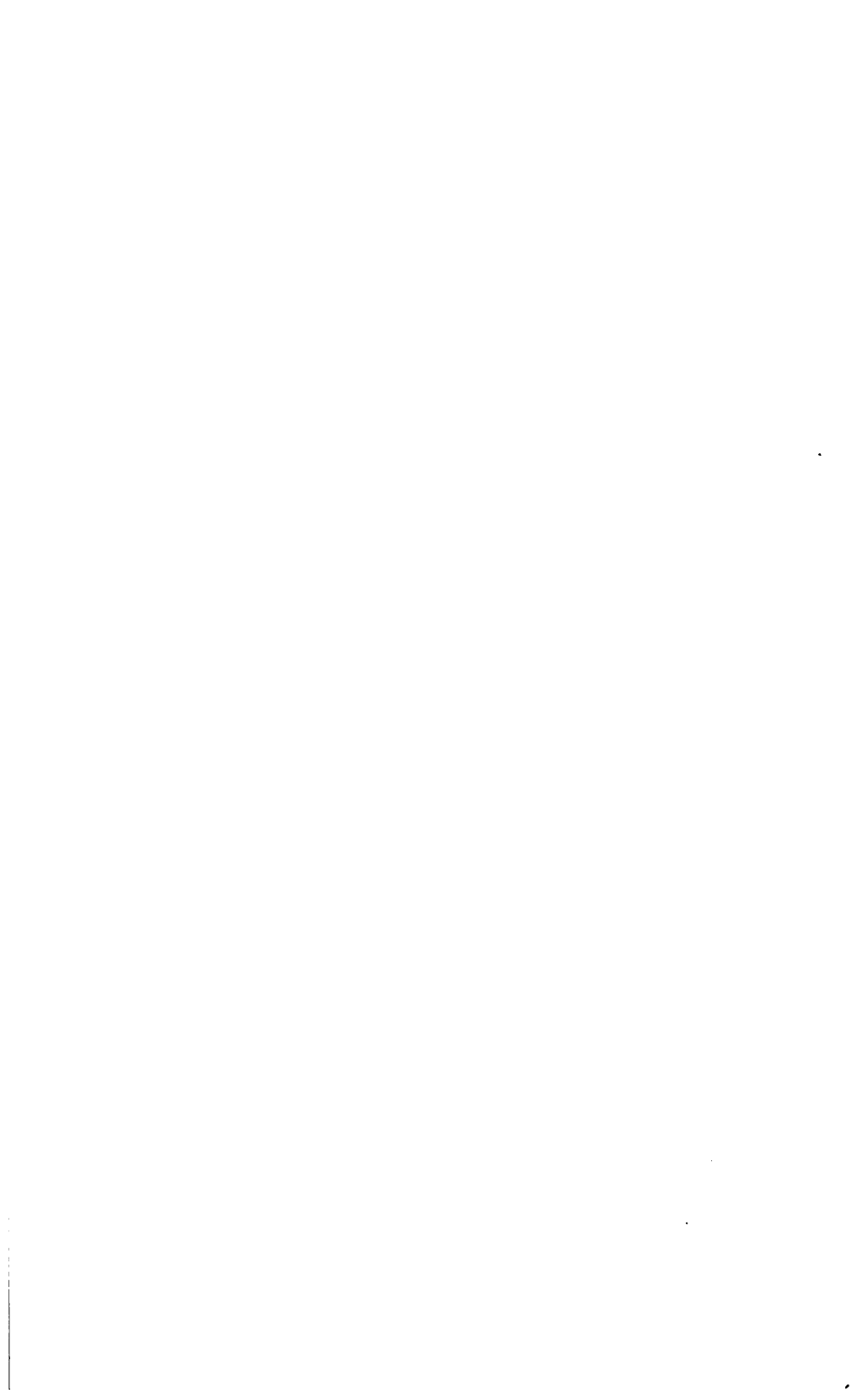
**T**HE eighteenth century was not favourable in England to the growth of spirituality of thought or life. After the first fair promise in Queen Anne's reign, when all promised well for the work and progress of the Church of England, the Georgian period supervened. Of that time it can only be said that whatever religious influences were exerted had their success in spite of the State, and not because of it. Deism in one of its numerous forms became with many the fashionable topic, and its wearisome arguments weighed down many and many a heart and life.

In Bridgwater, as in other places, a calm period of respectable propriety—it cannot be called activity—set in with George the First's accession to the throne. This continued, with varying detail, until the nineteenth century dawned. By that time the Evangelical Revival, followed as it was by the Oxford Movement, breathed upon the dry bones and gave them life. Yet apart from these tendencies there were ideas of sharp divergence (from the religious notions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) steadily growing in Bridgwater, as in other towns. The Reformation settlement, in matters of religion, satisfied some, but



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it did not satisfy all. To enter into this great subject at all fully would be to enter upon the attempt to analyse religious thought in England for two centuries—a gigantic task. It must here suffice to speak only of the outward indications of the expansion of men's religious ideals, as illustrated by the development of Nonconformist activities and organisations during that period within the Ancient Borough. They were vigorous, and they soon took an active form of their own.

The earliest body of Christian people—other than those belonging to the Church of England—to make their influence felt in Bridgwater, was the Baptist community. It is recorded that they were at work within the town as early as in the sixteenth century, but no written record exists of earlier date than 1689, when Mr. Toby Welles acted as pastor, and ministered to a flock consisting of some forty-nine members. Later on, about the year 1780, they suffered from the [most disgraceful disturbances in the conduct of their services. The place of their worship before 1692 is not accurately known, but in that year a chapel was built in St. Mary Street, which was in use until 1835. It was built behind some old-fashioned houses, through which an archway gave entrance to the building. Mr. Elliott became pastor in 1693, and he experienced many difficulties. In 1717 Mr. Evans succeeded him, and was followed by Mr. Evan Thomas in 1746, and Mr. Charles Harris in 1761. Again the way grew difficult, but Mr. Benjamin Morgan, who came as minister in 1791, in spite of many discouragements, toiled on perseveringly. The work proceeded, with

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varying yet increasing stability, under succeeding pastors, and in 1829 Mr. Henry Trend entered upon his long ministry of twenty-four years. It was during his term of office that the new Chapel was built, upon the old site, in 1838. Some years later the building was thrown open to the main street, and schoolrooms were erected.

Among the most successful later ministers were the Revs. W. M. Lewis, Henry Moore, and C. H. Marsack Day. The present pastor, the Rev. Herbert Trotman, took up the burden of his work with much vigour in 1896. So well did things prosper that it became necessary to enlarge the Chapel, and also largely to increase the Sunday-school accommodation. The work was taken up with great zeal and enthusiasm, and it has since been completed most successfully. The Baptists are now an exceedingly flourishing body of Christian people in the Town, and their influence is widely felt. Their long spell of effort has always been maintained, and their persevering fidelity to the doctrines of their communion has been rewarded. For three hundred years, or more, they have watched and waited and worked. They are now a strong and firmly established body, and they have gained an assured position in the historic annals of Bridgwater religious life.

Congregationalism is now a strong factor in the town's religious position, and it has been at work since 1793, when an Independent congregation used to meet together for worship. Mr. Corp, a splendid worker, came in 1818, and he aroused such enthusiasm that Zion Chapel, in Friarn Street, was built in

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1822, and became the home of the congregation. He stayed till 1830, having done a really great work. The Rev. Evan James succeeded him, and it was under his ministry that Sir George Williams (as he afterwards became), then a boy in Mr. Holmes' business house in the town, on a Sunday evening in the winter of 1837, became seriously conscious of religious convictions. He was afterwards the founder and life-long friend of the Young Men's Christian Association. Friarn Street Chapel flourished and increased. The Reverends John Bishop, Robert Panks, and Philip Barker successively became ministers, and in 1855 the Rev. E. H. Jones proved to be so successful that it was decided to build a new Chapel in a more central position. Fore Street was chosen, and the new building was opened in 1864. Since that time it has been considerably improved. Under the present minister, the Rev. Harry Butler, the traditions of successful work have been more than maintained, and the influence of the Congregationalists has decidedly advanced. Connected with the Fore Street congregation is the Mariners' Chapel in Eastover, built in 1838 for work amongst sailors, chiefly by the exertions of Mr. James Samuel Duck, who laboured there till 1869. Since 1886 the Charity Commissioners have issued an Order recognising Mariners' Chapel as an Independent or Congregational Chapel, and in 1897 it began to be conducted as a branch of the Fore Street head-quarters.

It must never be forgotten that the visits of the burning and zealous evangelist, John Wesley, left their vivid mark upon Bridgwater. His first visit to the town was on September 18th, 1746. In

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his journal he writes: "About one I preached at Beercrocomb. About five we reached Bridgwater. We expected much tumult here, the great vulgar stirring up the small; but we were disappointed. The very week before our coming, the Grand Jury had found the bill against the rioters who had so often assaulted Mary Lockyer's house. This, and the awe of God which fell upon them, kept the whole congregation quiet and serious. Before I preached my strength was quite exhausted, and I was exceedingly feverish through mere fatigue; but in riding to Middlesey I revived, and in the morning, Friday, the 19th, I rose quite well."

The next year Wesley visited the town, and also in the year following. In his diary, dated July 31st, 1747, he writes: "About noon I preached at Taunton. Much opposition was expected, and several young gentlemen came, as it seemed, with that design; but they did not put it in execution. From hence we rode to Bridgwater, and even at this dry, barren place, God largely watered us with the dew of heaven. After preaching I rode to Middlesey, intending only to meet the Society; but notice had been given that I would preach there, so I gave an exhortation to all that were present."

On Friday, September 30th, 1748, there is an entry in his journal, thus: "I preached at eleven in Taunton, at three in Bridgwater, at seven in Middlesey." A hard day's work, indeed. He continues: On the next day "I preached at Waywick about one, and then rode quietly on to Bristol."

Again in 1750 the good man was here. Monday, the 3rd September, "About noon I preached at

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Hillfarrance, three miles from Taunton. Three or four boors would have been rude if they durst, but the odds against them were too great. At five I preached in Bridgwater, to a well-behaved company, and then rode on to Middlesey." Then a lapse of ten years passes by, and we come to his entry of October 1st, 1760: "About one I preached at Halberton, and at Tiverton in the evening. The next morning I rode to Maiden-Down, where the congregation was waiting for me. About noon I preached at Taunton. The rain lessened the congregation at Bridgwater, a dead, uncomfortable place at best. About seven we set out thence for Baderip, in as dark a night as I ever saw, but God gave His angels charge over us, and we dashed not our foot against a stone. I was surprised to see a congregation at five in the morning, to whom I spoke with much enlargement of heart."

In 1769 comes the record of his last visit to the town. "Friday, 8th Sept., I preached, about nine, at Taunton, and then rode on to Bridgwater, where the preaching had been discontinued for some years. It was supposed there would be much disturbance, but there was none at all. The very gentry (all but two or three young women) behaved with good sense and decency." In the afternoon of the same day he rode on to Brent Hill, and Bridgwater saw his face no more.

His work, however, followed him, and the little band of hearers to whom he had preached did not forget his ministrations to them. He had followers in the town, although, as his Journal tells us, he was not hopeful as to its spiritual condition. The

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Wesleyans first set to work, it is recorded, in some humble quarters in Eastover, and there they managed to build a small chapel. As early as 1816 they took possession of the King Street Chapel, which has of course been since enlarged and added to in many particulars. Wesleyanism took deep root here, and it flourished. Its quiet influence, as everywhere, has borne good fruit. Were John Wesley living to-day, and were he to visit Bridgwater, the whole town would assuredly flock out to meet him.

The famous old Chapel in Dampiet Street has been sufficiently referred to in the former volume dealing with the history of Bridgwater. Its quaint and restful interior is singularly attractive, and it speaks of the years that have gone—darker and more cruel times, some of them—with peculiar vividness and force. Still the services go on. The Unitarian position is maintained, and the Rev. Rudolf Davis is the minister, most deservedly respected and loved.

In Friarn Street the home of the Society of Friends is yet another building for religious worship, which powerfully attracts the mystic, the quiet, and the contemplative man. The chapel, it is said, was rebuilt in 1801. The Society, however, possessed a Meeting House in 1722, and their brotherhood was in existence before that time. The Friends had a very wide influence in the town from quite early days. The soberness of their way of worship, the calmness of spirit which they inculcate, and the unruffled mien which it is their aim to cultivate are all very lovely things. Indeed, as a wise man said recently, "the Quakers have something to say for their position." The subject is a tempting one, and

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the student of religious method would fain linger over it.

Other developments of religious effort have exerted their influence in Bridgwater from time to time. The Catholic Apostolic Church once possessed a following in the town, and for a time they worshipped in a small building in King Street. Their influence was never a very strong or a very evident one, but it was earnest and sincere. The Bible Christians have done good work, and their chapel in Polden Street, under the leadership of the Rev. Matthew Hoare, is a centre of Christian effort which has a tale of much quiet zeal and successful labour to tell. The United Methodists have long maintained their position in the place. And, as in most other towns, the attempt to reach the very humble and poor, as well as the degraded and outcast, has for some years been taken in hand by a branch of the Salvation Army, whose head-quarters are located in the Old Zion Chapel in Friarn Street, which was built through the exertions of Mr. Corp, for the Congregationalists, some eighty-five years ago.

For a long time Cannington was the nearest place to Bridgwater where the Roman Catholic inhabitants could worship. But in 1846 a chapel was built in Eastover, which in 1882 became superseded by the handsome Church of St. Joseph, in Binford Place. There Canon Wadman ministers to his flock, a truly earnest and devoted priest.

As concerning the Church of England, the building of two new churches and one mission chapel within the last seventy years is sufficient to show that the energy of the nineteenth century did some-

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thing to compensate for the more lax effort of the eighteenth. Holy Trinity Church was built in Dr. Wollen's time, and was first used for public worship in 1839. Afterwards it was constituted a separate parish for ecclesiastical purposes, with a full organisation of its own. Similarly St. John's Church in Eastover was built by the Rev. W. M. Capes, and was consecrated in 1846. The first vicar was the Rev. J. C. Collins. The population and the work grew so rapidly that All Saint's Mission Church was built to meet the new requirements, and was opened on St. Mark's Day, 1882.

So rigidly condensed a record as the above can obviously take no account of the progress or internal development of religious thought within the period thus covered. It is not sought even to attempt to do this. For the purposes of this chapter the external and the evident are all that it is sought to adduce in support of the belief that immense religious expansion has taken place in the town since the days of Queen Anne. The thoughts of men, it can hardly be doubted, have widened with the process of the suns.

## CHAPTER XVII

### PERSONS AND THINGS

**I**F a Bridgwater citizen of the time of Queen Anne were able to-day to revisit his native town, to walk through its streets and take note of its changes, he would find strange alterations indeed. William Briwere's picturesque old stone bridge has gone; it was taken down in 1795. Its successor, too, has gone, and a third bridge spans the Parret, yet exactly at the same spot as of yore. No more can be seen the High Cross upon the Cornhill, or its companion the old Pig Cross (as it was called) near to the cattle market. They have both been removed, greatly to the sorrow of the antiquary. And the old citizen might look about him for the four Town Gates, which were characteristic features of the Borough, and he would be told that they were pulled down somewhere about a hundred years ago. The group of houses which formerly stood in High Street—they were known as the Island—now no longer block the traffic, and the row of cottages which were at the south side of St. Mary's Churchyard have all disappeared.

The visitor might be astonished, too, at the increased size of the place. There are so many more

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streets, and houses, than he ever saw. The oldest streets of all, High Street, Fore Street, Friarn Street, Dampiet and Blake Streets, Saint Mary Street, Ball's Lane, Eastover, and a few others, still preserve the same lines, yet they are vastly changed. The rough cobbles and the ill-kept roads are transformed; dimly lighted horn lanterns are replaced by gas and electric lighting; the few tiny and straggling shops have passed away, and more sumptuous successors have taken their place. The town has developed and spread on every side. When the Railway came, in the forties, Eastover quickly began to develop, and it has now a large population, extending far beyond the old boundary of the East Gate. Along the Taunton Road, as far as Hamp House, new streets have sprung up, and they are still increasing. It is the same westwards, up beyond West Street and along the Durleigh Road; so also towards Wembdon, where a veritable suburb is arising. Yet it is not so very long ago since the Malt Shovel Inn was the last house out of the town in that direction. Round about where the old Castle stood—in the region marked on old maps as Castle Bailey—the houses adjacent, in King Square, Castle Street, Court Street, and even down to the north side of Fore Street, contain many subterranean remains of the Castle cellars and storage places. Of the Castle itself only two relics survive above ground. One is the beautiful old Water Gate by the Quay (hidden away amidst some old houses) and the other is a fragment of the Castle wall, just at the top of Chandos Street. In many other parts of the town, as is inevitable, what was old is giving way to what

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is new. Old houses are being demolished to make room for others of modern design. Castle Street was a few decades ago the fashionable quarter of Bridgwater. Now it is getting to be the custom to dwell in newer houses just outside the town.

Thus the old gaol has gone from Fore Street, and the almshouses which were located in Old Taunton Road have been transformed to other uses. North Fields are no longer fields, but are covered with houses. Instead of the lumbering stage-waggons, and the gay and splendidly equipped stage coaches and mail coaches, two railways now convey travellers to and from the place, and the ubiquitous motor-car glides swiftly through the streets. The turnpike gates have gone ; and instead of men selling buckets of drinking-water at a halfpenny each, the modern system of water supply exists. King James' School has ceased to be, but Dr. Morgan's School, founded by the good Churchman of that name in 1723, is teaching a large number of boys, and has so far survived the many schemes which have been drawn up for its working by the Education Authorities of the realm.

Two hundred years ago the medical profession had not a very strong representation within the town. All this is altered. In 1813 the Bridgwater Hospital Scheme was started, and was carried through with complete success. Sir Philip Hales was the first President, and Dr. Dunning and Dr. Haviland the first physicians. Mr. John Symes, Mr. Haviland, and Mr. William Anstice were the first consulting surgeons, and Messrs. Henry Axford, Toogood, Haviland, and Stradling the first surgeons. The

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first annual sermon at St. Mary's Church on behalf of the Hospital was preached in 1820 by the Rev. Henry Stanbury, and the last in 1907 by the Rev. F. G. Coote, Rector of Thurloxton. The latter was the eighty-eighth annual sermon preached. There are sad stories of grievous sickness in the Town in the earlier decades of the nineteenth century. At one of these visitations, when the cholera came, it was suggested that tar barrels should be burnt in the streets. This was done, and, it is said, with good effect. Many of the victims of that scourge were buried in Chilton Churchyard.

Changes are to be seen in the old Parish Church of Bridgwater. Happily the lines of the great and beautiful building are unchanged, and the fabric is being well cared for. Still Murillo's beautiful picture hangs above the altar, and facing it, at the west end, Queen Anne's Royal Arms are suspended above the old thirteenth-century arch. There were once groups of galleries erected in the Church, but Mr. James, an active Vicar who came in 1848, took them all down. Many restorations, both of the exterior and the interior, have taken place there. Of the later Vicars, the Rev. Michael Ferrabee Sadler became known all over England by his many theological books. He was something of a recluse, but an able and absolutely conscientious man. Mr. Nihill, who was Vicar of the town for four years only, was, as a Nonconformist gentleman describes him, "a good clergyman indeed." And there are still many people living who remember the genial kindness of the Rev. W. G. Fitzgerald, who held the living for thirty-three years.

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There have been developments, of course, in the number and method of the Church services. Things were not particularly active in that way in the eighteenth century. At that time people loved politics, elections, and Deist disputations. Little beyond the Sunday services was attempted, and there is no doubt that there was considerable spiritual deadness in the town. Yet some of the eighteenth-century clergy were remarkable and able men. One such was the Rev. John Coles, already alluded to in previous chapters. He was the son of Mr. John Coles (*circa*. 1682), a merchant of the town, partner with Walter Ferguson and David Anderson in a large distillery business. He built his house and distillery in Chandos Street. In addition he was a shipowner, whose ship, *The Snow Queen*, traded with Cadiz and other ports. His son, the Rev. John Coles, was a man of great strength of will; and he wielded considerable influence in the town. In 1742 he was made Vicar of Bridgwater, and held that position until 1785. Mr. Coles held strong political views, and there is evidence that he showed no scruples about declaring them. A very characteristic water-colour drawing of him exists, painted by Mr. Chubb, who was no mean artist. The Vicar is dressed in a tightly buttoned-up coat, with gaiters, and wearing a shovel-hat and a full wig. Under his arm is a knobby stick, and on his face is an expression of strong determination. His eldest son, John, became a Fellow of Balliol, and a rector in Cornwall. The second son, James, a J.P. for the County of Somerset and Receiver-General for the Western District, died at the Lodge, Taunton, in

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1804. The family is an old one. In the time of Henry VIII and earlier they spelt their name Colles, being lineally descended by a younger branch from the Colles of Somerset family.

In 1785 Dr. Wollen came as Vicar. He stayed on until his death in 1844, and was a considerable leader of society in the town. But perhaps he is better remembered as being the last Vicar of Bridgwater who wore a wig. Up to his time all parsons wore wigs. Dr. Wollen lived in Castle Street, and he is said to have been somewhat of a stern man. It was before his time that an Afternoon Preacher was appointed for St. Mary's Church, but during his Vicariate the Evening Service, with a special Preacher, came into vogue in 1833. Mr. Middleton was selected for the position, an able and most earnest man, and an excellent preacher. Since Mr. James' day the Vicar of Bridgwater has always filled the position. This, indeed, became necessary by reason of evening services being adopted in the towns all over England. At one time, however, the people of St. Mary's had the Vicar to preach in the morning (in the afternoon he went out to Chilton Trinity), Mr. Parsons of Goathurst in the afternoon, and Mr. Middleton in the evening.

A friend has written down a reminiscence of the year 1840. It is quoted, as seems best, unaltered. He says of that period: "When every family had to make their own matches with flint and steel and tinder rag and a small stick six inches long, dipped in hot brimstone. When wheat was a guinea a bushel. When people lived on horse beans, and barley cakes, flavoured with a herring. When little boys had to

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crawl up the chimneys to clean them. When little boys, only six years old, drove bullocks ploughing."

In June, 1853, there passed away a man of singular integrity, goodness, and learning ; Mr. William Baker, F.R.G.S., Secretary to the Somerset Archæological and Natural Society, a man of great industry and aptitude, and whose reputation in the town justly stood very high. He was born in Eastover in 1787, the son of a thriving butcher. He entered upon the career of a currier, and very early began to devour books on Natural History and kindred subjects, and became an ardent student of natural objects. In 1806 he wrote to a friend : "I get up before five o'clock, and read ancient history till six, my time to go to work ; at breakfast time I read the *Spectator* for a quarter of an hour ; after dinner I have three-quarters of an hour, which I employ in reading Blair's lectures ; after work I read ancient history from eight till nine o'clock ; from nine till half-past ten or eleven I study Euclid ; and on Sundays before and after dinner I practise drawing." At the age of twenty-two he started business as a currier in Bridgwater. Mr. Baker, during his long and honourable life, became acquainted with Dr. Buckland and many other of the ablest men of his day, and his influence for good in the town and neighbourhood was very great. His diligence was simply stupendous, yet he never neglected business. He is still remembered, and deservedly so, as one of the shining lights of the old Town. He lived before the days of local Public Libraries, yet he succeeded in becoming a learned man in days when

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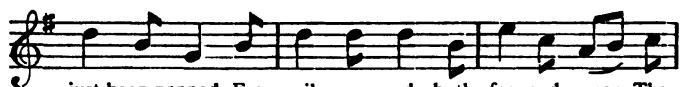
books were scarce, and costly, and very hard to obtain.

Of late years the even tenor of Bridgwater has been but little disturbed, save during the serious strike of workers engaged in the brickmaking trade, which occurred in 1896. Mr. Richard Else was at length nominated as arbitrator in the dispute, yet so serious was the situation that rioting began, and soldiers from Plymouth had to be drafted into the town, and lodged in extemporised quarters within the Town Hall. On the 3rd of July, at 3 a.m., the Mayor for that year, Mr. Alderman Pollard, had to read the Riot Act, directing all people to disperse peaceably, and return to their homes. Thus quiet was restored, but not until the strike had lasted fourteen weeks, and much distress had been occasioned.

The St. Matthew's Fair still flourishes, but its business transactions have greatly diminished from the olden days. Other methods now prevail, and the doings of the Fair are mostly confined to agricultural dealings, and to the pursuit of pleasure. Mr. Cecil Sharp, the well-known authority on folk-songs, kindly sends the following, being the first of a set of six verses—the old Bridgwater Fair Song. The music was noted from the singing of Mr. William Bailey of Cannington.



Come, lads and lass-es, pray at-tend Un-to these lines that's



just been penned. From miles a-round, both far and near, They

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come to see the rigs o' the Fair: So, Mas - ter John, do



you be-ware, and don't go kiss-ing the girls o' Bridgwater Fair.

In addition to the Fair, the Fifth of November is still celebrated in the town with intense enthusiasm and vigour, and forms, in fact, quite an annual pageant. It has come to be, one may surmise, a present amusement rather than a historical commemoration.

Such is Bridgwater, and such it was. It has passed from William the Conqueror's days, through many evolutions, to the time of King Edward the Seventh. It has produced some worthy sons, and it has seen hard times. The days of its fightings, we will hope, are over. Not so, however, its activities. These must continue, and even increase, if the Ancient Borough is to go on and prosper. *Floreat Brugie!* May the days before it be as sturdy and as vigorous as its past has been: may its men be strong, and brave, and true, as in old Briwere's days. And may it go on to weave yet further history still, of which some other pen, perchance a century hence, shall write.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ODDS AND ENDS

**I**T is inevitable that several notes and scraps of information should rise to the surface in dealing with the story of any place. It has been so in writing this book. They are such as do not come precisely within the subjects of any of the preceding chapters, and therefore they are written separately below. They range, it should be added, beyond the two hundred years covered by the preceding pages, and some few of them fall almost within the period of ancient days.

*Church Bells.*—A bond, executed by Wm. Purday, of Clothesworth, County Somerset, Bell-founder, to the Mayor of Bridgwater, in the sum of £20, to ensure that he will “at his owne proper costes charges and expences well and suffycyently repaire mayntayne and keepe the third bell of the quire of bells now hanginge in the tower of Bridgwater within three monethes warning geven by the Wardens of the Towne.” Dated 19th March, 1578.

*Decay of Property.*—Copy of an order of the Court of Wards and Liveries discharging the Bailiffs of the town of the sum of 103s. 4d. yearly overplus of a rent of £16 due to the Court, for property now much decayed. The decay is attri-

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buted to the dissolution of the monasteries of Athelney and Dunkeswell and the Grey Friars of Bridgwater. Dated 1537.

*The Rectory of Bridgwater.*—Bond by James Boyes, Mayor, Robert Watkins and John Gallington, al. Galhampton, Bailiffs, and the Burgesses of the town, to the Queen Elizabeth in £1000 to observe the covenants in the letters patent of the Queen granting for a term of years to the Mayor, etc., the Rectory and Parsonage of Bridgwater, viz., that they shall pay to the Crown the rents, etc., specified in the said letters and shall satisfy and pay a yearly stipend "to a Mynyster and likewise to a scolemaster" in the said town. Signed by James Boyse, Mayor; Robt. Moleyns; Geffre Shyrcum; Wm. Gold; John Edwards; Ric. Hiatt; Ric. Castleman; Phyllype Holworthy; and Robt. Watkins and John Galhampton, Bailiffs. Dated 1571.

*A Ship Wrecked in the River Parret.*—John Page and Richard Davy, of Bridgwater, grasyars, execute a bond to John Hamond, merchant, John Nicholas and John Dey, in £20, that they will, before St. Bartholomew's Day next, "rydde or cause to be rydde as moche as is possible to be rydde by man's handes of the hulle of the Venycian shippe latelie perished in the ryver of Brydgewater befor Hunspill, owt and from the said ryver, and also save, kepe harmlesse, and dyscharge the Maier Bailiffes and Burgesses of Brydgewater aforesaid and theyr successors of and for the dew clensing of the said ryver in that place where the said hulle now lyeth or where the said hulle shall happen hereafter to tarry, stycke, and abide within the same ryver." This wreck was

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evidently blocking the navigation of the port. The document bears date 1549.

*Penalties imposed at the Court of the Manor.*—This is a roll of three membranes containing extracts of presentments and fines (Borough of Bridgwater) imposed at the Court of the Manor with the view of the Frank-Pledge held thereat, Michaelmas Term, October 5, 1508. For Estover and Were; Friars Minor Street; St. Mary's Street; Without West-Gate; Orlow-Streete; High Street, north-side; and ditto, south-side. Offenders in any of the following misdemeanours in trade or habit were to be fined.

Those who give short weight in bread.

Brewers who broke the assize of beer.

Those who sell putrid fish.

Victuallers who take exceeding profits.

Beer-sellers.

Sellers of bad leather.

Those who do not clean their dung-hills in Orlow-Strete.

Those who have not scoured their water-courses in Estover.

Those who throw garbage outside Northgate.

Innkeepers who take too much profit.

*The Vicar's Service Book.*—A note or memorandum, taken from a Bible or Service Book in the Parish Church of Bridgwater, desiring the prayers of those who read it "for the soul of John Colswayne, Vicar of the Church," who bequeathed it, as a special memorial, to be kept by the Vicars for the benefit of the parishioners. This is a late fifteenth-century document. One wonders what eventually became of poor John Colswayne's book.

*The Choosing of Sixteenth-century Members of*



**THE RIVER PARRET**

*Facing Page 262*



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*Parliament.*—An indented bill witnesseth “that Geffrye Shircombe, Mayor of Bridgwater, with consent of the Burgesses, has chosen Sir Thos. Dyer, Knight, and Robert Mullens, gentleman, to be Burgesses for the town at the next Parliament.” Dated January 6, 1559. Note: both these names appear in the Members’ List for that year.

*Bridge Profits.*—An indented lease, dated 1655, records that the Mayor leased to Thos. Turner, for £45, “the profits of the duty called Pontage, arising by the passing of Boats under the Bridge, for seven years.” This seems to be a moderate sum, but money had an immensely greater relative value in Queen Elizabeth’s days.

*Bridgwater Free School in 1682.*—The Mayor and others appoint Samuel Hill, clerk, to be Schoolmaster of the Free School in Bridgwater, and seek the Bishop’s confirmation of the appointment. This is one of the earliest records of school appointments.

*The Town Water-supply.*—A counterpart exists of a lease granted by the Mayor, Aldermen, etc., to Richard Lowbridge, of Sturbridge, County Worcester, of liberty to cut and bore timber, open pavements so as to lay pipes to supply water, and provide a cistern, etc., within the Borough, for 1000 years at the yearly rent of one shilling, with condition, etc., by undertaking to pay the lessee £100 on bringing water as aforesaid into the town. Dated 1694. Note: this lease was afterwards annulled.

*Quay Duties, Pontage, and Cranage.*—A lease is recorded, granted by the Mayor and Aldermen to

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Thomas Quarrell, *al.* Quarle, grocer, of the key-duties, pontage and cranage, belonging to Bridgewater, for three years, at a yearly rent of £40. Dated February, 1722. Coal was excepted from this agreement, which seems to be an advance upon the earlier leasing of the pontage in 1655. The importing of coal was evidently very considerable, and of course implied constant use of the crane. Hence the town officials keep that duty and privilege to their own use.

*The Famous Conjuror Baker.*—The publication *Vox Stellarum* for 1830 gives a curious account of this strange man. "Richard Baker, of Westleigh, in the Parish of Burliscombe, Somerset, a small farmer, died in 1819, full of years and iniquities, being 70 years old, and having during the far greater part of his life practised the gainful tactics of the Black Art." For fifty years, the account states, Baker had been daily and hourly employed in alternately counting the wages of his villainies and in laughing at the follies of a cheated multitude. But his life "is too much clogged with the heaviness of a guilty account to allow one redeeming ray to qualify the lurid aspect of his moral reckoning. It may surprise the distant reader, whose ears have never been afflicted with the doleful superstitions of the Western Counties, to be informed that such was the fame of the deceased Wizard that the educated as well as the uninstructed, of all classes, were in the habit of resorting to him from all parts, for the exercise of his cabalistic skill. On a Sunday, which was the day for his high orgies, vehicles of superior as well as of lowly

## ODDS AND ENDS

descriptions were found to bring him an eager throng of votaries. His reputation was universal, and his gains proportionate."

Bad crops, lost cattle, lost treasure, and lost hearts brought their respective sufferers in ceaseless crowds to his door. They were all *overlooked*, he said. He foretold to the Southcottians the Shiloh would not come. The tenant of a sterile land was advised, after a careful inspection of his presiding star, to provide a certain quantity of manure, which being spread over his grounds in the form of ram's horns at twelve o'clock precisely on the full moon night, would infallibly secure a good crop. This astonishing prediction has been repeatedly verified! "Strayed stock and mislaid property have been strangely recovered, by only being well looked after, provided the wise man had once taken the matter in hand; and many a relenting Phyllis who had parted with her Strephon in a huff has been heard to exclaim, on finding him return at the very hour calculated by the conjuror, that sure 'Baker and the Devil were in partnership.'"

His most serious misdemeanours were, however, when he led the victims of disease to rely upon his pretended skill. "Charmed powders and mystic lotions were confided in; and the death of the old and young has been the consequent penalty of such deplorable imbecility." A poor child died at Wellington, a martyr thus to her mother's credulity. "She consulted the heartless villain, and was assured that the infant was *overlooked*. Some powders were given to her, accompanied with the slang verbosity of his craft, which the little sufferer

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was compelled to swallow, notwithstanding that the mother declared that it made her heart bleed to see the agonies of her child while taking the dose." The writer of the account describes this as "a cold-blooded murder, to be added to the atrocities which marked the career of this miscreant through life." Conjuror Baker is said to have amassed money, as indeed he easily may have done. His career is a sufficient proof of the marvellous credulity of people in those days.

*Vox Stellarum.*—This almanack added to its attractiveness for the people of Bridgwater, and others, by its dark hints as to the future. The author, in a fine burst of confidence, justifies the use and the value of hieroglyphics, thus: "If the Hindoos represent beginnings of events by heads of men and animals, bold beginnings by horns, endings by legs and feet, and feeble endings by an old man lying prostrate: if a serpent with a baboon's head and a goat's feet has a meaning which always pays for deciphering, and serpents denote either subtilty, or poison, or immense duration, or creeping policy, or what not; why are they to be despised who aim by their accompaniments to explore their signification?"

"Why," asks the learned author, "should not inquirers rather imitate the patient zeal of the learned author of *Palibothra*, who, in his elaborate work on the tenets of the Boodhists, devotes more than forty pages to serpent worship? But want of room forbids my discussing these points fully. I therefore present my annual hieroglyphic. Its interpretation is in the womb of Time."

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Certainly the interpretation of the hieroglyphic—a most villainously printed picture descriptive of nothing at all—leaves nearly everything “in the womb of Time.” The seer, however, unbends so far as to allow himself to launch out into some prophetic utterances. Thus, “the times still seem pregnant with matters of great moment, especially in the German and Ecclesiastical States.” In a bold statement the prophet declares that “the minds of men will be much occupied with mundane affairs.” The measures of conciliation to the Roman Catholics “will give uneasiness to some scrupulous consciences.” Others think that “It will give to Ireland that peaceful repose to which she has been a stranger for ages.” The student of the future then plunges boldly. “Unless,” he writes, “I swerve from the rules of Art, I must declare that the affairs of most nations incline as yet to a pacific disposition.”

Next, he foretells that “persons in honourable posts shall augment their fortunes, while the commonalty will have less cause to complain than they have had.” Again, “there are likely to be many notable marriages this Quarter; and private weddings, though closely celebrated, will be much talked of.”

For the autumn quarter of the year our prophet is more full. “I have long been in possession,” says he, “of the predictions of J. Adam Müller, called in Baden the Maisbach prophet, and find them in many respects as interesting and complete as those of Nostradamus.” This is probably true; the one set of predictions is most likely as valueless

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

as the other. One of these announcements is this :  
“ That in the East of Europe there will be a struggle between two monstrous females, one a heathen Christian (*sic*), the other a Turk ; that each shall conquer the other, and that then they shall unite in bearing a large book scented with the richest perfumes and surmounted with a massy golden crown ; that this book shall be universally read, when Britain knows and keeps her true place, and after a year of universal opposition.”

It seems almost incredible that such poor stuff as this should have been published and eagerly read in the West, and no doubt in our own town, as recently as in the year 1830. Yet it was. The *Vox Stellarum*, it is said, was a most popular publication.

*The Almanack*.—At the head of each month in the *Vox Stellarum* Almanack is a verse, faintly suggestive of prophecy, and sometimes quite alarming. Two specimens only of these remarkable effusions need be quoted. They are respectively for June and August.

### I

See how the Time prevails ; how it comes on ;  
’Tis always gay and glorious here to some.  
Let Heaven add, add to adorn this stage,  
Peace to its Glory, vigour to its Age.  
But hold ! methinks I’m interrupted here,  
And bid for some unwelcome News prepare.

### II

The grand presages of this month do call  
Some great ones to be mindful of their fall ;  
Heaven will no bribes receive, but what is just,  
Give man reward according to his trust.  
Mark who the Traitor is, behold his fate !  
Under his Prince’s wrath, the People’s hate.

## ODDS AND ENDS

Thus there was provided a thrill—more or less exciting—for every month. It may have been a relief, possibly, for the quieter lives of a hundred years ago.

*The Bull and Butcher Inn.*—On page 177 two interpretations are given of the possible origin of this name. It may, of course, have only the plain meaning which it bears, and may possess no hidden derivation. There was, however, a hundred years ago, the most intense terror of Napoleon Buonaparte. It was feared that he would invade England. The following rhyme, it is said, used to be sung by mothers to their babies, while rocking them to sleep, and hoping that they might be kept safe. Many ignorant folk regarded the great Corsican soldier as a sort of giant, who would devour people. This was the lullaby.

He's as tall as Rouen steeple,  
He's not made like you or I,  
He could kill a hundred people.  
Hush ! my baby, do not cry.

O if he should chance to see you,  
Lying thus upon my lap,  
O he'd eat you, eat you, eat you ;  
Gobble you, gobble you ; snap, snap, snap !

The fear of invasion was less acute in the West Country, perhaps, than further eastward in England. In Kent and Sussex it was very real, and great preparations were made for the Napoleonic invasion, which never came.

*The Bridgwater Treatises.*—These once famous treatises have no connection with the town save through the title of their founder. This was

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

Francis Henry Egerton, Earl of Bridgwater, grand nephew of the first Duke of Bridgwater. He was a clergyman, born in 1758, succeeding as eighth Earl in 1823. He died in 1829, and the title became extinct. By his will he left the sum of £8000 to be awarded to the author of the best treatise "On the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, as manifested in the Creation." This was to be set forth by such arguments as the variety and formation of God's creatures in the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms; the effect of digestion; the formation of the human hand; also of many ancient or modern discoveries in art, science, or literature. By the advice of the trustees (the President of the Royal Society, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, and another) it was decided that eight awards of £1000 each should be given to the writers of eight treatises dealing with the subjects indicated by the testator.

The treatises, naturally, had a wide circulation and much influence in their day. They were all published between 1833 and 1840. The following are the writers and subjects.

1. *The Adaptation of External Nature to the Moral and Intellectual Constitution of Man*, by the famous Dr. Thomas Chalmers.
2. *Chemistry, Meteorology, and Digestion*, by William Proutt, M.D.
3. *The History, Habits, and Instincts of Animals*, by Mr. Kirby.
4. *Geology and Mineralogy*: some very interesting work by Dean Buckland.

## ODDS AND ENDS

5. *The Hand, as evincing Design*, by Sir Charles Bell.

6. *The Adaption of External Nature to the Physical Condition of Man*, by Dr. J. Kidd.

7. *Astronomy and General Physics*, by the famous Dr. Whewell.

8. *Animal and Vegetable Physiology*, by P. M. Roget, M.D.

These treatises, of course, are written from the scientific standpoint of seventy years ago. Thus they are useful as landmarks, and as showing the best thought of the time, before the doctrine of evolution had been presented to men's minds. Theologically, also, they bear the impress of early nineteenth-century thought.

*Notes of the Town made in the Year 1835*.—Samuel Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of England*, 1835, gives a few interesting notes of that date. "In a short time the streets will be lighted with gas, under an Act obtained in 1834. A new road from Bristol to this town is about to be formed, whereby the distance will be shortened five miles. Coal is brought free of duty from Monmouthshire and Wales, and is conveyed into the interior of the county by a canal to Taunton." The custom-house duties in 1833 amounted to £8019. The government of the town was then vested in a Mayor, Recorder, two Aldermen, two Bailiffs or Sheriffs, and eighteen Burgesses, assisted by a Town Clerk, three Serjeants-at-mace, and subordinate officers. The Mayor and Bailiffs were chosen annually, but the rest usually held their offices during life, the Mayor,

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

Recorder, and Aldermen being Justices of the Peace within the Borough and Parish. The freedom was inherited by the eldest sons of freemen, and acquired by servitude and gift. Among the privileges which it conveyed was the freedom of all ports in England and Ireland, except those of London and Dublin. Two Members were then returned to Parliament. The right of election was formerly vested in the inhabitants resident within the Borough properly so called (which comprised 158 acres) paying Scot and Lot, the number being about 400. But this number was extended by the Act of 2 William IV, cap. 45, to the £10 householders of an enlarged district, containing 742 acres, which, by the Act of 2 and 3 William IV, cap 64, was made to constitute the new Borough. The number of votes registered at the first general election under the Reform Act was 484, of whom 132 were Scot and Lot votes. [Note as to *Scot and Lot*. The old legal phrase Scot and Lot embraced all parochial assessments for the poor, the church, lighting, cleansing, and watching. Previous to the Reform Act the right of voting for Members of Parliament and for municipal officers was, in various English boroughs, exclusively vested in payers of Scot and Lot. Scot is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *skeat*, pay.]

*The Town Hall Tapestry*.—In the council chamber now hangs a piece of tapestry work representing a scene in the history of Philip of Macedon and Alexander his son. It was the gift of Mr. Chapman, of Hamp House, and was originally purchased from Enmore Castle. The following explanation



WEST STREET: ST. MATTHEW'S FAIR DAY, 1907

*Facing page 272*



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of the scene is now inserted by request. It is taken from Rollin's History. "An accidental occurrence made Philip entertain a very advantageous opinion of Alexander. There had been sent from Thessaly to Philip a war horse; a noble, fiery, generous beast, called Bucephalus. The owner offered to sell him for 13 talents, about £1900 sterling. The king went into the plains, attended by his courtiers, in order to make trial of this horse; but he appeared so very fierce, and reared so when any one came near him, that no one dared to mount him.

"Philip, being angry that so furious and unmanageable a creature had been sent him, ordered him back again. Alexander, who was present, cried out 'What a noble horse they are going to lose for want of address and boldness to back him!' Philip, at first, considered these words as the effect of folly and rashness, so common to young men; but as Alexander insisted still more upon what he had said, and was much vexed to see so noble a creature sent home again, his father gave him leave to try what he could do. The young prince, overjoyed at the permission, goes up to Bucephalus, takes hold of his bridle, and turns his head to the sun; having observed that what frightened him was his own shadow, he seeing it dance about or sink down in proportion as he moved. He therefore first stroked him gently with his hand and soothed him with his voice; then seeing his fierceness abate, and artfully taking his opportunity, he let fall his cloak, and springing quickly upon his back, first slackened the rein, without once striking or vexing him, and when he perceived that his fire was

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

cooled, that he was no longer furious and violent, and wanted only to move forward, he gave him the rein, and spurring him with vigour, animated him with his voice to his full speed.

“While this was doing, Philip and his whole court trembled for fear, and did not once open their lips; but when the prince, after having run his first heat, returned with joy and pride at having overcome a horse which was judged absolutely ungovernable, all the courtiers endeavoured to outvie each other in their applause and congratulations; and, we are told, Philip shed tears of joy on the occasion. Embracing Alexander after he had alighted, and kissing his head, he said to him, ‘My son, seek a kingdom more worthy of thee, for Macedon is below thy merit!’”

*A Coaching Accident; Jemmy Bradley.*—A correspondent, one *Viator*, wrote to a Bridgwater local paper in September, 1833, the following account of an accident which he witnessed: “When *The Age* coach, on its way from London to Bristol, on Saturday the 7th inst., and proceeding at the rate of about seven or eight miles an hour, had almost reached the World’s End, a public-house at Tilehouse—the night dark, the coach lamps lighted, and the hour near ten—the coachmen and a gentleman on the box thought they discerned—suddenly—between the leaders’ heads, something red waving in the air that disappeared the moment it was observed. The coachman instantly called out, drew his startled horses aside, and as quickly as possible stopped them, convinced that injury or death had happened by the trampling of the

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horses, or by the wheels of the coach, if the object over which they seemed to pass should prove a human being. Attended by some of the passengers, the coachman hastily descended. Some seven or eight yards from the coach, and near the centre of the road, was found an aged man in ragged attire, prostrate on his face; a basket containing matches and a roll of tracts, with a long staff and a sort of iron paddle by his side, and near him a military cocked hat with flowers and pieces of red cloth rudely stitched together. They raised him quickly from the ground; his face was bruised, bleeding, and covered with dirt; his beard long, filled with dirt, and clotted. He was quite insensible, no word fell from his lips, a groan was all that escaped him. I felt his pulse, and it beat slowly. He was conveyed to the World's End. I procured some water and washed his face: his head seemed much bruised—his face was wounded, but bled little after washing; his pulse beat slower and fainter, and in about ten minutes from the time we raised him he breathed his last. On examination it appeared that the wheels of the coach had passed over his head and down the middle of his body. A coroner's inquest was held on the body on the 9th inst., and a verdict of accidental death returned; for it appeared that Old Jemmy had been drunk all day, and in that state was walking in the road. Thus perished in the seventy-second year of his age that Prince of Mendicants, Jemmy Bradley, of whom many singular stories are recounted, and whose life, if tainted by vices, was not without some virtues to adorn it. He was generally attended in

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

his vagrant excursions by some unfortunate poor, and frequently orphan boy, who shared with him the fruits of mendicancy and astrology, until he could improve his situation, which was often done by means of the character given him by his eccentric master. And here it should be remarked that old Jemmy would keep no boy in his service who, being ignorant of, would not be taught the Lord's Prayer; or who, being instructed, omitted his prayers night and morning. In every town and village of many counties in England was Jemmy Bradley known; in the houses of the rich and the cottages of the poor was Jemmy hospitably entertained, and to most a welcome visitor, and his hapless death will cause many a regret."

*Lighting the Town with Gas*, 1833.—In July of this year a meeting was held in Bridgwater to take into consideration the propriety of lighting the town with gas. It was well attended, and was presided over by Mr. Richard Anstice, the Mayor. The following resolutions were passed.

"1. That the introduction of Gas Light to the town of Bridgwater would be attended with considerable public and private advantage to the inhabitants, and that it is desirable to adopt measures to promote so beneficial an object.

"2. That for the purpose of promoting the aforesaid object, it is expedient to form a Joint Stock Company, under the title of the Bridgwater Gas and Coke Company.

"3. That the present capital of the Company be £4000, and that it be raised in transferable shares of £20 each, in such instalments and at such times as

## ODDS AND ENDS

shall be determined on at a future meeting of the Subscribers, or by a Committee by them appointed.

“4. That a book for the purpose of receiving the names of subscribers be now opened, and left at Mr. George Awbrey’s Library.

“5. That in order to afford as large a number as may be of the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood the opportunity of becoming shareholders, no individual or company shall be allowed to take more than five shares from the present time to the 31st of August next; but if at the end of that time, the whole of the shares be not disposed of, those remaining may then be taken in any larger number by the other subscribers in proportion to their existing shares.

“6. That whereas the Trustees of the Market-House possess certain powers under their local Act of Parliament, a Meeting of the Subscribers to the Company shall be held on the 19th inst., at the Town Hall, at ten o’clock in the morning, who shall appoint a Committee to confer and treat with the said Trustees, for permission to lay down the pipes of the projected Gas Works, and to enter into such other stipulations with them as circumstances may require.

“The number of shares taken up to Saturday last was 104.”

*Mr. C. J. K. Tynte and the Reform Bill.*—At a meeting held on Michaelmas Day, 1832, Mr. Tynte was rather twitted with his change of opinion over the Reform Bill. Mr. Escott had spoken, and Mr. Tynte’s speech is worth recording, since it explains the position which he took up. He said:

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

“I do not deny that I, at one time, held opinions contrary to those which I now hold. I did suppose that the Reform Bill would be injurious to my country, because I supposed it would be of too sweeping a nature, but when I went among the electors of this county, when I found that a feeling did prevail over all England, I allow that I changed my mind, and was possessed of all the incapacity which has been attributed to me; I will go further, and will say, when I saw Mr. Escott at Bridgwater I did say to him, ‘Why don’t you come forward for the county, and I will support you?’ But I will state that a considerable time elapsed between the last election and the present one, if it may be so called. I have from that time been on the continent, and mingled with all ranks and classes of society. I found there was a spirit abroad in favour of Reform, and having been abroad for some time, I did not know so much of this country as I ought to have done; I believe, and I solemnly say it, it has prevented a revolution in this country. I do say, publicly, that I changed my opinion; I stated that certain Reform was necessary, though I did not intend to go on until I knew how far that measure would go. I have stated at public meetings—I have stated on every possible occasion—though I confess I now stand before you certainly in the most painful situation. I do not consider it is the custom for one candidate to catechise another, exactly in the manner which Mr. Escott has very properly done; and, that gentleman coming into this meeting with almost the functions of a judge upon him; I say it is difficult for me to express

## ODDS AND ENDS

my opinion under the embarrassment under which I now labour. I believe there may be at this hour some who object to me who did not object to me before. I did, I say it from the bottom of my soul, believe that this would occur to me on the change of my opinion, but I assure you I felt a conviction from the bottom of my heart, that I ought to change my opinion. I saw a paragraph in *The Age* newspaper a few weeks since, which said that Mr. Bickham Escott intended to dissect me; I confess he has dissected me, but, gentlemen, there are a very few instances of resuscitation after dissection. I am one of those instances, but I own that, standing under the weight of that accusation, which I feel in a very great degree, I can only do, as I have always done in soliciting your votes, that in all instances where I have been requested to state my opinions, I have always most honestly and openly confessed having changed my opinion, and given a reason for that change."

## CHAPTER XIX

### STATISTICS

**S**OME facts and figures must be given in regard to the History of the Town, which scarcely fall within the scope of any particular subject or chapter. It is therefore thought better to place them separately at the end of the book.

#### THE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FOR BRIDGWATER

These are given below, from the first year of Queen Anne's reign. The first two gentlemen whose names are recorded as having represented the town in the Nation's Parliament were Johannes de la Weye and Walterus Jacob, in the year 1295. It is not thought necessary to give the names before 1701.

1702 Sir Thos. Wroth	1722 George Bubb Dod-
George Balch	ington
1705 Sir Thos. Wroth	Thos. Palmer (Re-
George Balch	recorder)
1708 George Dodington	1727 George Bubb Dod-
George Balch	ington
1710 Nathaniel Palmer	Sir Halswell Tynte
George Dodington	1730 Thos. Palmer (to fill
1713 Nathaniel Palmer	one vacant seat)
John Rolle	1734 George Bubb Dod-
1714 George Dodington	ington
Thos. Palmer	Thos. Palmer

# STATISTICS

1741 Vere Poulett George Bubb Dod- ington	1812 George Pocock William Astell
1747 Peregrine Poulett George Bubb Dod- ington	1818 George Pocock William Astell
1753 Robt. Balch (vice P. Poulett, died).	1820 William Astell Charles K. Kemys Tynte
1754 Earl of Egmont Robt. Balch	1826 William Astell Charles K. Kemys Tynte
1761 Edward Southwell Earl of Egmont	1830 William Astell Charles K. Kemys Tynte
1762 John James Perceval Gabriel Lord Coleraine	1831 Charles K. Kemys Tynte William Astell
1768 Hon. Anne Poulett Benjamin Allen	1833 Charles K. Kemys Tynte William Tayleur
1774 Hon. Anne Poulett Benjamin Allen	1835 Charles K. Kemys Tynte John Temple Leader
1780 Hon. Anne Poulett John Acland	1837 Henry Broadwood Philip Courtenay
1784 Hon. Anne Poulett Alexander Hood	1841 Henry Broadwood Thomas Seaton Forman
1785 Robert Thornton (vice Hon. Anne Poulett, deceased)	1847 Charles K. Kemys Tynte Henry Broadwood
1790 Hon. Vere Poulett John Langston	1852 Charles John K. Tynte Brent Spencer Fol- lett
1796 George Pocock Jefferys Allen	1857 Charles K. Kemys Tynte
1802 George Pocock Jefferys Allen	
1806 Hon. Vere Poulett John Langston	
1807 George Pocock Wm. Thornton	

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

1857 Alexander William Kinglake	1865 Philip Vanderbyl (vice George Patton, appointed Lord Advocate of Scotland)
1859 Charles K. Kemys Tynte	
Alexander William Kinglake	1868 Alexander William Kinglake
1865 Henry Westropp	Philip Vanderbyl.
Alexander William Kinglake	
1865 George Patton (vice H. Westropp, unseated)	

## THE MAYORS OF BRIDGWATER

These date from the year 1469, John Kendall's name standing first on the Roll. The following list includes all the names which are recorded since the first year of the reign of Queen Anne.

1702 Thomas Beare	1718 Nich. Jefferys
1703 Robert Steare	1719 Edw. Raymond
1704 William Bicknell	1720 John Morgan
1705 John Miles	1721 Jonath. Thomas
1706 John Gilbert	1722 John Gilbert
1707 Rich. Drake	1723 Rob. Steare
1708 Nathan Galpine	1724 Joel Gardner
1709 George Balch	1725 Edw. Raymond
1710 John Gilbert	1726 Nich. Jeffreys
1711 John Roberts	1727 Ferdin. Anderdon
1712 John Trott	Joel Gardner
1713 Jonath. Thomas	1728 William Prior
1714 John Miles	1729 Stephen Kidgell
1715 Rob. Steare	1730 Joel Gardner
1716 Will. Criddle	1731 Will. Prior
1717 Fernan. Anderdon	1732 Samuel Smith

# STATISTICS

1733 Philip Baker	1769 Richd. Marchant
1734 William Prior	1770 Christr. Gardner
1735 Joel Gardner	1771 Charles Holcombe
1736 Ambrose Hozee	1772 Thos. Allen
1737 Thomas Yates	1773 Chas. Anderdon
1738 Stephen Kidgell	1774 Christr. Gardner
1739 Samuel Smith	1775 Benjn. Symes
1740 Jonath. Dipford	1776 James Wollen
1741 Philip Baker	1777 Robt. Balch
1742 Thomas Boone	1778 Christ. Gardner
1743 Philip Baker	1811 Thos. Pyke
1744 John Pinn	1812 William Inman
1745 Ben. Beale	1813 James Mills
1746 Tho. Quarell	1814 Willm. Ford
1747 John Sealy	1815 Willm. Inman
1748 Rich. Marchant	1816       "      "
1749 William Moore	1817 Robt. Anstice
1750 Henry Lasher	1818 Jacob Watson
1751 John Tuckett	1819 John W. Crosse
1752 Ben. Good	1820 Joseph R. Poole
1753 John Pinn	1821 Edward A. Strad-
1754 Rich. Gould	ling
1755 Sam. Smith	1822 Richd. Woodland
1756 John Tuckett	1823 Thos. Symes
1757 Tho. Phelps	1824 Jonatn. Toogood
1758 Ben. Good	1825 Robt. Anstice
1759 Sam. Phelps	1826 Edwd. Sealy
1760 Sam. Smith	1827 Richd. Anstice
1761 John Tuckett	1828 Jacob Watson
1762 Tho. Phelps	1829 Fredck. Axford
1763 Ben. Good	1830 William J. Allen
1764 Sam. Smith	1831 John Evered
1765 Thomas Giles	1832 Joseph R. Poole
1766 John Cox	1833 Richd. Anstice
1767 John Tuckett	1834 Richd. Woodland
1768 Saml. Phelps	1835 Anthy. Southby

# BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

1836	Thos. W. Inman	1871	H. F. Nicholls
1837	Robt. Ford	1872	" " "
1838	Richd. Woodland	1873	Jos. R. Smith
1839	Thos. Symes	1874	" " "
1840	Fk. Axford	1875	George Wilton
1841	R. Badgehot	1876	" " "
1842	W. D. Bath	1877	James Leaker
1843	" " "	1878	Thomas Collins
1844	T. H. Watson	1879	William Thos. Holland
1845	J. Ruddock	1880	William Thos. Holland
1846	J. Sealy	1881	Clifford Symons
1847	J. C. Parker	1882	Thomas Collins, died R. O. Backwell
1848	Jas. Trevor	1779	Benjn. Symes
1849	Jas. Haviland	1780	Thos. Phelps
1850	R. Ford	1781	John Phelps
1851	" "	1782	Chas. Anderdon
1852	T. Ford	1783	John Cox
1853	G. Parker	1784	Edwd. Sealy
1854	Willm. Browne	1785	William Tuckett
1855	John Browne	1786	George Beale
1856	W. D. Bath	1787	John Crandon
1857	J. Ruddock	1788	John Chubb
1858	" "	1789	James Mills
1859	R. Woodland	1790	William Anstice
1860	R. Ford	1791	Tho. Pyke
1861	J. Browne	1792	John Crandon
1862	" "	1793	Thos. Holloway
1863	J. Ruddock	1794	Willm. Anstice
1864	J. Browne	1795	Robt. Codrington
1865	" "	1796	John Symes
1866	Geo. Parker	1797	Robt. Codrington
1867	John Baptiste Ham- mill	1798	Willm. Ford
1868	Jos. R. Smith		
1869	George Bryant Sully		
1870	" " "		

## STATISTICS

1799 Thos. Holloway	1891 Henry Knight
1800 Richd. I. R. Jenkins	1892 Thomas Manchip
1801 Robt. Codrington	1893 Thomas Manchip
1802 John Symes	1894 Henry Wm. Pollard
1803 Jacob Watson	1895 Henry Wm. Pollard
1804 Robt. Anstice	1896 Henry Wm. Pollard
1805 Jefferys Allen	1897 Richard Charles Else
1806 Richd. I. R. Jenkins	1898 Frederick C. Foster
1807 Chas. H. Burt	1899 Thomas Good
1808 Willm. Ford	1900 Thomas Good
1809 James Mills	1901 William Thompson
1810 Thos. Symes	1902 Thos. Wm. Man- chip
1883 W. T. Holland	1903 Thos. Wm. Man- chip
1884 Francis James Thompson	1904 Thos. Wm. Man- chip
1885 Alfred Peace	1905 Henry Wm. Pollard
1886 Alfred Garratt Barham	1906 Henry Wm. Pollard
1887 Alfred Peace	1907 Henry Wm. Pollard
1888 William Hurman	1907-8 Frank Wills
1889 John Henry Wad- don	
1890 Frederick C. Foster	

The Recorders of Bridgwater, since 1702, have been as follows.

1683 Sir Francis Warr	1841 John Roy Allen
1719 Thomas Palmer	1861 Ernest H. Reed
1735 Edward Dyke	1872 Peter Henry Edlin, Q.C.
1745 John Earl Poulett	1898 Wyndham Neave Slade
1764 Vere Earl Poulett	
1788 John Earl Poulett	
1819 Jefferys Allen	

## BRIDGWATER IN THE LATER DAYS

### POPULATION OF THE TOWN

In 1695 it was said to be about 2200 ; and in the limits of Haygrove, Dunwear, and Chilton about another 600. In 1797 there were 3000 inhabitants. Since then the census figures have been thus: for 1801, 3634. 1811, 4910 people, with 859 houses. In 1821, 6155 people. In 1831, 7807 people. The figures rose in 1841 to 10,430. In 1851 there was but little change: 10,883. For 1861, 12,120 inhabitants. In 1871 and 1881 the advance was small; to 12,636 and 12,704 respectively. In the latter of these two years there were said to be 2994 inhabited houses in the town, and 298 houses not inhabited. For 1891 the figures were 12,419 inhabitants. The last census, in 1901, gives for Bridgwater Parish (within the Borough) 15,168; Bridgwater Parish (without the Borough) 944; Bridgwater Parish (within and without) 16,112. Some increase has taken place since then.

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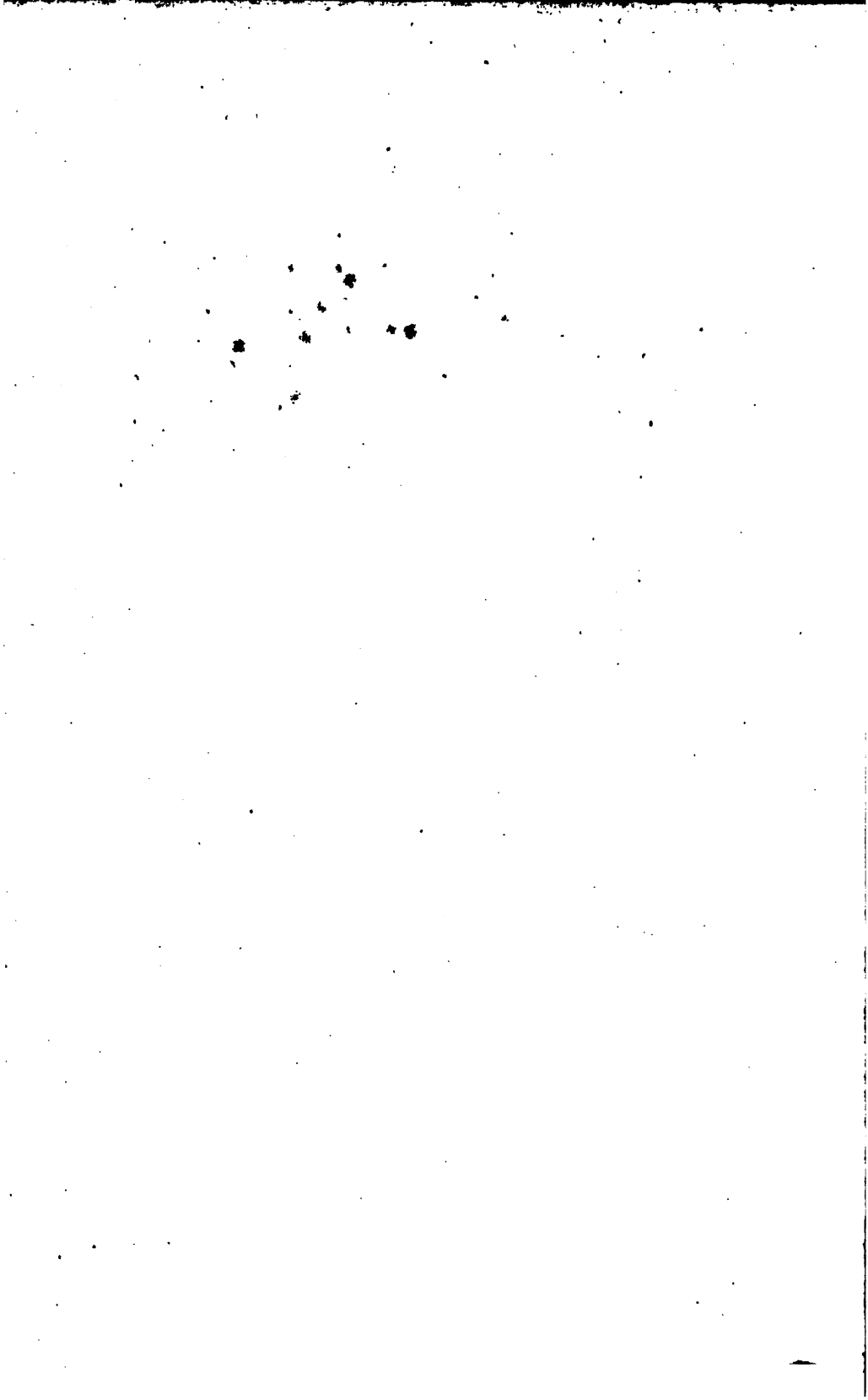
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